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The Prophets Speak to Us Anew

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THE PROPHETS SPEAK TO US ANEW

BY
RABBI DAVID WANEFSKY

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Explanatory Note

In this volume the books of the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve Minor Prophets), are summarized chapter by chapter. Each summary gives the message of the particular chapter in a clear and comprehensive manner. None of the ideas in the chapter were left out and no effort was spared to retain the stylistic beauty and strength of the prophetic vision. Special emphasis, however, was given to those ideas which have a singular appeal and are of vital significance to the modern mind.

These summaries were not written from memory; they follow the text. Hence the reader who is familiar with Hebrew can easily read on in the text if he uses this summary as a guide. Much to his delight, I am sure, he will find the interpretation of the chapter to be quite new and of an especially modern flavor. He will also find that this new interpretation does not in any way deviate from the implicit meaning of the text. Moreover the difficult words and phrases of the text resolve themselves easily and in a most natural way in the light of this new interpretation of the prophetic message.

Wherever the explanatory words are not obviously implied in the text they are given in parenthesis. From time to time the number of the verse is given in order to keep the reader posted so he may not lose his place in the text.

THE PLACE OF THE PROPHET IN THE NATIONAL LIFE OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

ORGANIZED JEWISH LIFE in ancient Eretz Israel was based upon three pillars which were to support and preserve its existence. These were (1) the Prophets (2) the Priests (3) the Kings. Of these three pillars or (to say) institutions the prophets were the most important. They established the moral *nevo* and formulated policy according to which Jewish life was to be lived and governed. The priests were the teachers whose task it was to teach the Torah to the people in accordance with the moral tone and high intent set by the prophets. The kings were the executive branch who were supposed to carry out the foreign policy as urged by the prophets and condition the life of the people upon the laws and ethics of the Torah. It was the absolute conviction of the prophets that the integrity and independence of the people could be preserved only if they lived within the moral bounds established and carefully drawn by them.

This organizational pattern of the nation was first established by Moses—the greatest of the prophets. He has written the Torah which comprises the basic law, the great moral values and ethical ideas as well as the accumulated spiritual heritage of the nation. Aaron was the priest and as such he was the teacher who taught all this to the people. His attitude toward the people therefore was on a more intimate and personal level. Joshua was

the commander who helped carry out the policies and teachings of Moses in a practical manner.

This pattern of life, however was entirely disrupted after the death of Joshua. Only part of the land (Eretz Israel) was conquered under the leadership of Joshua, and being beset by constant struggle with the enemies about them the Jews could not organize themselves on a national basis. Henceforth the people were ruled sporadically by the Judges and the institutions of Prophets, Priests, and Kings ceased to function. Gradually, however, the people overcame their difficulties, and as the time became ripe for a nationally organized life there appeared on the horizon the next important prophet. This was the Prophet Samuel. Samuel established a King in the person of Saul over the people who was to fulfill the part played by Joshua; he re-organized the priesthood and with himself as the prophet the pattern of national life as it was established by Moses was reconstructed again.

National life was further strengthened and expanded under King David, and it reached its acme of development under King Solomon. It was at this point of highest national achievement that the degenerating germ began to infest the national organism. It began with the introduction of the various idolatrous cults into the land, which were practiced by the assorted heathen wives of King Solomon. The prophet Ahiyah Asholoni realized the overwhelming danger involved in this situation. Idolatry was not only destructive of itself but it also served as a guise under which flourished all the vices and viciousness that were bound to undermine and eventually destroy the national existence. The prophet Ahiyah therefore acted to break up the Jewish State into two parts

before it went down altogether. Whatever were the calculations of Ahiyah at the time the State of Ephraim which he helped Jereboam to establish and of which the latter was the first King, eventually went under. It was however for the preservation of the existence and independence of these two States—Ephraim and Judah—that the coming prophets dedicated their unexcelled genius.

The greatest battle that was fought for the preservation of the State of Ephraim was waged by the prophets Elijah and Elisha. The prophets who followed such as Hosea, Amos, Micah—continued valiantly with the struggle but, alas, it was to no avail. With the depravity which beset the people through the idolatry introduced by their very first King Jereboam and with its attendant vices, such as adultery, bloodshed, and conniving, the State of Ephraim was doomed to perish. The foreign enemy Assyria only had to inflict the coup de grace upon it and it ceased to exist.

The prophets, however, were more successful in their fight for the preservation of the State of Judah. Chief among these prophets was Isaiah. The reason for this greater success lay in the fact that Judah's Kings, descendants of the House of David, for the most part cooperated with the prophets. King Hezekiah, for instance, was under the complete influence of Isaiah. He undid all the damage caused by his father Ahaz in the way of idol worship and all its attendant vices. The kings who preceded Ahaz were also righteous in the main and were determined to order the lives of the people in accordance with the teachings of Isaiah, Amos, Micah, and the others. The land was again thrown into a turmoil of idolatry and bloodshed under the rule of Menasseh, son of Hezekiah, but order was again restored by his grandson King Josiah.

However, after the death of King Josiah the tide of reckless living in which king and people alike indulged could no more be stemmed by the prophets. Jeremiah who lived at the time was most eloquent and vehement in his denunciation of king and people alike for their indulgence in all sorts of frauds and deceptions in business, toward labor, and for their immoral personal lives. He, like all other prophets, warned them of the disastrous consequences that must follow such vicious practices, but his fiery words could not turn the scale on the side of truth, justice, and right behavior. Under the rule of King Zedekiah Judah went under in the war waged upon her by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.

The priests were supposed to be the natural allies of the prophets in their fight against the immoral indulgences of the kings, their ministers, and the people. Unfortunately, however, the priests succumbed quickly under the pressure exerted by king and people. They lined up on the side of those forces which promised a more abundant life. But the pattern of political and social life required also the services and cooperation of the prophets. This need, however, was swiftly fulfilled by the emergence of a class of false prophets. Such reckless and unscrupulous individuals who would sell their souls for gain always appear when sought for, and those times were of course, no exception. These false prophets claiming to speak in the name of God, justified the ill behavior of the kings and people and yet assured them of peace where clearly there could be no peace. The true prophets, therefore, in addition to battling the king, his officers, and the people, were equally embroiled in their struggle against the priests and the false prophets. In the case of Jeremiah he was even physically molested by those false

prophets when he stood up against them, not to speak of the terrible treatment he had received at the hands of either king or officers. But this whole struggle ended with the end of the two states of Judah and Ephraim. The activities of the true prophets too lasted a while longer, but soon were extinguished.

It is of considerable interest to note that the prophets were concerned not only with the state of affairs in Israel but also with the fate of foreign peoples. In the first place came the foreign nation which was supposed to be Israel's ally in war, and for the most part that was Egypt. Egypt lay to the south of Palestine and the latter's invaders mostly came from the north like Assyria and Chaldea. Were Palestine conquered, Egypt would be next on their program. It was therefore natural for Israel to seek to combine with Egypt in a common front against the same enemy. The prophets, however, forever warned the people not to rely upon or trust in Egypt's help. Either they do the will of God and Egypt's help will not be necessary or it will be of no use should they persist in their transgressions. The fate of Israel's aggressors was next in the consideration of the prophets. These aggressors like Assyria and Chaldea in time grew very proud of their military strength. This strength they would ascribe to their own valor rather than that they were merely the tools in the hands of God. In thinking that they were responsible only to themselves they acted most irresponsibly. They would not only aim for the conquest of the land and its people but would wantonly destroy even that not directly in their path of conquest. This display of wickedness, according to the prophets, would in the end prove to be their undoing. God's wrath would be visited upon them until they would go down to utter

destruction, much to the delight of the conquered peoples and to the relief of those yet unconquered.

There were many other hostile peoples surrounding Israel that would not take the initiative of attacking them. Some such were Amon, Moab, Edom, Tyrus and Sidon. However, while they would not attack Israel directly they would rejoice at Israel's plight and would gladly lend a helping hand to their enemy. This vicious attitude on their part would indicate their low state of morality. The prophets therefore predicted with certainty their ultimate doom. God could not permit the further existence of such peoples. The prophet Ezekiel is especially clear and precise about the guilt of those peoples even without examining in detail the moral worth of their inner life, as he and the other prophets did in the case of their own people.

It is true that Israel sinned even if not to the same degree as did the heathen peoples about them. However, their sins were of such gravity as to wreck their independence and destroy their country; and what was left of them had to go into exile. The prophets would never tire of warning them that these calamities would occur as they must be the consequences of their reckless and undisciplined life. Yet the prophets would almost in the same breath assure the remnants of the people of a new rebirth. In the end God would gather the people from all the lands into which they were scattered and bring them back into their own land where they would begin a new life—a life of happiness, prosperity and security. How did Israel earn such prophetic assurances? Indeed the prophets knew their people. Unlike all other peoples Israel's faith in God is not a mere pious expression; it is an integral part of their very being. Their idol worship and whatever else

their vices were, were really of a transitory nature. Essentially all this was foreign to their intrinsic spiritual make-up. While in their own land they were really in a rut regarding these evils. The shock of exile, however, and their direct contact with the colorless and unholy lives of the strange peoples would bring them back to their senses. A new appreciation of their own values would affect their spirit, in a way that they would not be lost among the nations. Moreover God would restore them to their national greatness in their own land even to surpass the glorious days of ancient times.

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May they always be in a position to help their fellowmen.

The Author

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ISAIAH, CHAPTER I

THE INTRODUCTORY SENTENCE limits the approximate time during which Isaiah prophesied; it was during the reign of the four kings, Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Verses 1-4. The prophet seems to view Israel from a historical perspective and consequently sees them as nothing else but the people of God. According to the manner in which Israel was nourished and brought up as a people they should have felt their direct and vital attachment to God almost instinctively, and yet they failed Him even intellectually.

Israel has become "a sinful people, a people of evildoers and corrupters," which tends to destroy entirely their holiness and consequently their enviable position as God's people.

Verses 5-9. Their fatal course, however, cannot escape dire tragedy. Israel's physical well-being as well as their freedom and independence are in imminent danger. The prophet sees them stricken with maladies from the sole of the foot even unto the head, and their land completely burned and destroyed where, but for that special grace of God, none would be left even as in Sodom and Gemorrah.

Verses 10-15. To think that outward form and religious ceremony could maintain Israel in its position as God's people is the height of folly. Their gatherings at the Temple for the sacrifices are considered a trampling

of the holy grounds and their prayers a farce so long as their hands are "full of blood."

Verses 16-20. The prophet, however, sees only one way out of this mire—the way of repentance. They must cease to do evil and resolve to do good. The fundamental requirement of repentance is the dispensation of justice. The absence of any sort of oppression will safeguard their independence and spare their physical well-being.

Verses 21-31. The prophet now cries out bitterly against the changed conditions. Zion used to be a state filled with justice and righteousness, but now its judges and legislators have turned into "murderers, thieves," anxious for graft and chasing after reward. The situation, however, is not altogether hopeless, for what Israel was it could still be again, since its inherent goodness could never be entirely destroyed. After a thorough purge the catastrophic situation will reverse itself—Zion will assume its glory and again will be called "The City of righteousness, the faithful City."

ISAIAH, CHAPTER II

THIS PROPHECY WAS a vision about Judah and Jerusalem.

Verses 1-5. It will come to pass in the "last days" (apparently when man will be forced to realize that his moral standards must measure up to the strides of his civilization), that nations will turn to seek the source whence moral strength and ethical doctrine come forth. It will be then that they will turn to Zion and Jerusalem, for "out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." But the prophet states what will be the chief contribution of Zion, namely, the establishment of perfect peace through the medium of justice

and law to the end that "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks," never to learn the art of war again. The prophet is enthused by his own vision and cries out to the House of Jacob that they begin right now to walk in the "light of God."

Verses 6-10. But reality grips the prophet again. Israel is not unlike the great civilizations about them, with endless wealth, horses, and chariots. In the end the false ideas and the idol-worship tend to deteriorate them so that man whether big or small becomes low and unworthy even to be sustained. The prophet is appalled by this smallness of man and bids him hide in the dust before "the fear of God and the glory of His Majesty."

Verses 11-22. The prophet foretells the certain doom of that whole civilization, all of which has come about through the vanity and haughtiness of man. It will be then that not only will man be humbled, but that he will recognize himself the emptiness of his values.

The prophet, therefore, sounds the warning to avoid (the false values) of mortal man for indeed he is of little consequence.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER III

Verses 1-7. The corruption and violence on the part of the richer and ruling class of the people, which came directly as a result of the introduction of strange cults to replace the word of Israel's God, has brought the land into a veritable state of chaos. The prophet sees the complete breakdown of the economic, educational, and political order. Even the rich will share nothing with the poor; of the expert educators in the various fields none

will be left. Their rulers will be the young and the irresponsible. The spirit of the people will be at such a low degree that even the worthier ones would reject office for lack of confidence in themselves.

Verses 8-11. None else is responsible for this terrible state of affairs in Judah and Jerusalem but the people themselves. Even as the righteous one enjoys the fruits of his good deeds so does the wicked one suffer the consequences of his evil deeds.

Verses 12-15. The prophet is overwhelmed with remorse as he observes the incompetency and recklessness of the leaders, after he issues his warning to them that they will yet have to account to God for their corrupt leadership. He cries out pleadingly in the name of God, "Wherefore do you beat my people to pieces and grind the faces of the poor?"

Verses 16-26. The prophet foretells complete despair upon the daughters of Zion, who in their arrogance have overstepped all bounds of modesty in their dress and excessive ornamentation.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER IV

Verses 1-6. After the prophet sums up the horrible situation in the land where seven women will take hold of one man (after most of them would be destroyed in war) and require of him nothing but that he be called their husband, he pictures a glorious life for the remnant of Israel. The holiness which characterized Israel's life will be reestablished again after its "filth" is washed away by the mighty flood of suffering, and God Himself will guard and protect Israel from all enemies.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER V

Verses 1-7. The disappointment which God suffered in Israel was entirely unexpected. The prophet likens Israel to a lovely vineyard carefully planted by an expert agronomist. The vineyard was expected to yield the best grapes, but instead it "brought forth wild grapes." God will therefore remove all protection from Israel, His vineyard, and will thus turn it into a waste land.

Verses 8-17. The prophet cries out bitterly against the two main faults of Israel: (1) their drive after material wealth; (2) their eagerness for physical pleasure. As an example of the first instance, they would resort to all sorts of trickery to squeeze the land out of the weaker ones, and as for pleasure, they would forever spend their time in drinking hard liquors, to the accompaniment of music. Such a life excludes spiritual values entirely—laments the prophet—foretelling thereby that the punishment will surely fit the crime. The land will not yield its fruit and their noisy pleasure will be shut off by the oncoming exile. This will humble them enough that they should open their eyes to the true values of a holy and righteous life.

Verses 18-23. The prophet describes the several stages of the degenerative process. It begins with the mere thought that probably God is unconcerned with man's deeds and destiny. This acts to bring about a change in values which in turn bolsters their confidence in their own wisdom, and this leads directly to the pitfall of a corrupt and wanton life.

Verses 24-30. This degenerating life, being devoid of all moral strength, will eventually sap the vitality and

energy of the nation, leaving it an easy prey for a foreign power who will swiftly and mightily descend upon them.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER VI

Verses 1-8. The prophet here seems to describe his first prophetic vision. It is of God as he sits upon His throne, surrounded by six winged seraphim, who in unison thrice proclaim the holiness of God. (The three repetitions may denote the holiness of God, the holiness of His word, and the holiness of Israel to whom His word is directed.) The prophet feels that Israel is not quite holy, but rather unclean, and so is he, being one of them. The prophet, however, is pure, and needs only a ceremonial act of forgiveness administered by one of the seraphim, after which he declares himself ready to fulfill his mission.

Verses 9-13. His first mission is to go to the people and explain to them the nature of their fundamental shortcomings. It is owing to their comfortable living that they refuse to give any thought to the higher values of life. If they should disregard this warning by the prophet, then there remains only one way in which to make them serve, listen, and consider; that way is to deprive them of their comforts. Becoming homeless and landless, the better ones will learn the holiness of their origin.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER VII

Verses 1-9. It was during the reign of Ahaz that Pekah, king of Ephraim, and Rezin, king of Aram, threatened to declare war upon the kingdom of Judah. It was planned to conquer Judah and combine it with Ephraim, although

the former would be ruled by a separate king, under a new dynasty. Ahaz was badly frightened upon learning of this oncoming danger. The prophet, however, was sent by God to dispel the king's fear, since the fate of the two countries, Ephraim and Aram, had already been sealed. The fire of these two firebrands is out; they are merely sending off their last puffs of smoke.

Verses 10-25. It seems, however, that the prophet's reassurance failed to quiet the King. When the prophet suggested that God would even perform a miraculous sign in support of his prophecy, it was again rejected by the king, in the belief that God would not save him, more than could his "tired" and incompetent army. The prophet then, in the name of God proposed a sign of his own. It was that his wife would give birth to a boy, whose name would be called Immanuel (with us is God.) That name would have two meanings, describing effects of two expected events. In so far as Ephraim and Aram were concerned, Immanuel would spell out their quick doom, since God would be with us. However, Judah may expect attacks from another direction (since the king is so adamant in his lack of faith and love of fear) from Assyria. Here again Judah, although largely demolished, will yet not perish, but will rise again with the little left to it, as will indicate the name Immanuel (with us in God.)

ISAIAH, CHAPTER VIII

Verses 1-8. The sign of the previous chapter, which was of a twofold nature, was now to be reaffirmed and carried out in deed. It was to be reaffirmed by actual writing and testimony of witnesses. The four written words were "Maher-shalal-hash-baz," referring to the imminent

pillage of Aram and Ephraim. Also the child that would now be born to the prophet would indicate that; and secondly, the eventual attack of Assyria upon the State of Judah. This attack would even be encouraged by the dissension of the people within the State of Judah, part of whom are inclined to make peace now with Ephraim and later with Assyria.

Verses 9-15. The prophet, however, denies that the lot of Judah would be the same as that of the other peoples. While the others cannot hope to withstand the might of Assyria, the latter's plans, though, will be foiled in the case of Judah (Immanuel.) The prophet, therefore, urges the people not to support the rebels, but to put their trust in God, since He will prove to be the undoing of Israel's enemies (from within and without), as He will also be the salvation of Judah.

Verses 16-18. The prophet turns to the learned class of the people and bids them guard this prophecy. As for himself, he is full of hope that his child and the implications of his name will come true, though everything seems to be veiled now.

Verses 19-23. In so far as Ephraim is concerned, there is no use in appealing to them to trust in God, since they are so steeped in witchcraft. But hard and dark is their fate, since the enemy will not tire until they are completely driven off their land from around the Sea of Tiberias first; Transjordan next; and then from the rest of the land.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER IX

Verses 1-4. The clouds of war were gathering and the people felt as if they were walking in the shadow of death,

but the prophet saw a great light, and a great joy in store for the nation; he saw the enemy, though a raging storm now, a cloth dipped in blood for its emblem, consumed by a sudden fire as were the Midianites in the day of Gideon.

Verses 5-6. The reason for this unimaginable outcome—declares the prophet—stems from the great character of the crown prince (Hezekiah), who is destined to take over the government and establish justice and righteousness in the land. He will trust in God, whom he will call by all wonderful names, and in return for which God will name him as the harbinger of peace.

Verse 7. Unfortunately, God's word of doom will find its target in Ephraim, since the latter would not curb its proud heart. They seem to think that the attacks upon their state, though severe, are only sporadic. After the attacks are over they will yet improve upon the ruined areas. That this is the ordered punishment of God, for their "hypocritical ways, their evil deeds, and their folly," would not occur to them. This will obviously result in the destruction of the false and strayed leaders, together with their followers, among whom are even found the fatherless and the widowed. Indeed, the wickedness itself will turn into a fire which will consume the people, who are no better than thorns and thistles, and amidst this great confusion, the land will be devastated without any mercy shown by one toward his brother. God's anger will not down until they and their vicious designs upon Judah perish.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER X

Verses 1-12. In case misfortune befalls a nation, it

must not be viewed as a mere mishap, but as a calculated punishment for sins committed. Such sins were committed by Judah, where trickery and oppressive laws were written with the object of depriving the weak and the friendless of their share of justice. The punishment, therefore, is not accidental, and hence there is no escape from it. This circumstance lulls Assyria into thinking that she is striking out against the nations on her own; that she can attack and subdue, because of her highly trained and illustrious officers, any and as many nations as she would wish. The gods, however, have never been an obstacle in her path of conquest, not even in Ephraim, and so will it be much the same in Judah. But, of course, Assyria is here making a tragic mistake, because she really is no more than the "rod of my (God's) anger." In Judah it is only up to a certain extent that her work of destruction will go, but then will God strike out against that proud heart and boastful brow.

Verses 13-20. When Assyria demolished the borders of countries and brought its multitudes low, she ascribed the feat to her own strength and wisdom. She thought that it was due to her might that there was not even a protest while she was gathering in those nations like eggs from a nest. But Assyria could boast of her great feats as much as the axe and saw, that the work was done without anyone to lift them and use them. The destruction of Assyria will be complete, but not accidental too; the light of Israel and his holiness will constitute that consuming flame. It will also constitute a lesson for Israel themselves to rely faithfully on none but on their God.

Verses 21-27. Unlike all other nations who perish through the decree of God, even if the people are vast and fit, Israel is saved through the forever remaining

remnant who cling steadfastly to God and righteousness. The people therefore, need not fear Assyria upon whom God's anger will soon be visited, even as it was visited formerly upon Israel's enemies.

Verses 28-34. Wherever the Assyrian armies marched by, they spread ruin and struck fear into the hearts of people, but Jerusalem will be their last stop. There is where the forest of people and the stately trees will be cut down Assyrian armies.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XI

Verses 1-16. It seems that the immediate salvation from Assyria brought a new vision to the prophet, of the time when salvation will be complete and worldwide. What we now call the Messiah will come forth from the House of Jesse (father of King David.) He will be a man entirely permeated with the "Spirit of God, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." His accomplishments will be twofold: (1) He will establish a new order of justice and righteousness in the land (Eretz Israel) after the Jews are gathered by him from the wide diaspora. (2) His good advice will extend to all the gentile countries on the earth, where information on his new order will be eagerly sought. In fact the world will so change under his dominant influence that even the wild beasts in the forests will be affected. They will no longer be preying on the domestic animals and will even eat grass as they do. Within Israel itself, there will be no jealousy. United they will fly to liberate their fellow Jews from the backward places in and around Eretz Israel,

while many of them will come in a miraculous way as in the time of the Egyptian Exodus.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XII

Verses 1-6. The consolation then will have been so great, that the grave historical grievances will be forgotten. The trust in God's protection will be so positive that it will dispel all fear. The joy will be buoyant and constant. That God has wrought all this will be a matter of common and widespread knowledge. The spirit of holiness will inspire with song and merriment the entire populace.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XIII

Verses 1-10. The bitter end of Babylon is here envisioned. Babylon's depraved condition will almost invite the enemy. To the Babylonians the enemy will appear to be tremendous and fierce, since God will command its coming. The sudden and stormy descent of the enemy will strike fear and discouragement into the hearts of the Babylonians even before they begin to fight. It will be a dark and cruel day when the accumulated sins will have to be destroyed.

Verses 11-18. The nature of Babylon's sin is its arrogance and haughtiness. While they consider themselves to be "nobles," other people are held by them in low esteem. But now the dignity of man will be restored again; a man will be "more precious than fine gold, even more than the golden wedge of Ophir." The heavens and the earth are trembling over this sin. But their punishment will fit the crime; their men, women, and

children will be slaughtered and mistreated as worthless things, for it will be more an ideological war than one of material aggression.

Verses 19-22. The devastation of the land of the proud children will be so complete that it never will be settled by man again; instead, all sorts of beasts will dwell there.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XIV

Verses 1-8. In his mercy God will have chosen Israel again—when, after the downfall of Babylon, they will be restored into their own land. The people will then wonder how such a mighty ruler, conqueror and destroyer of nations, has so suddenly collapsed. But men and even nature will celebrate this great event.

Verses 9-27. In hell all the great rulers and tyrants will be equally astonished to find him there in a condition not at all better than theirs. In his ambition, even the whole world was small for him; in the heavens, he aimed to set up his throne. But now! now he looks so small and insignificant. Nay! his lot is even worse than theirs, for he has even been cast out of his grave and dragged round like an "abominable branch." His own people would not forgive him for having destroyed their own land too, for which offense his sons too, would be put to death. In the end his fate will be the same as that of Assyria, for such is the irresistible will of God.

Verses 28-32. At the death of Ahaz and the ascendency of King Hezekiah, the power of the Philistines was broken by the latter. Israel was relieved while all foreign envoys informed their peoples that Zion was now safe for its own people.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XV

Verses 1-9. Here the tragic end of Moab is envisioned. The two principal cities of Moab, Ar and Kir, will be attacked by the enemy, suddenly at night. This will throw the rest of Moab into a terrific panic. The howling and crying which will quickly spread throughout the country, will scare and demoralize the army itself. "My heart shall cry out for Moab," exclaims the prophet movingly as he beholds her plight; the stream of refugees as they clog the principal roads. The fertile and abundant land has been devastated together with the inland waterway Nimrim, so that the stored wealth of the country the enemy had to carry off by way of another river. Its scorched earth and bloody rivers constituted a danger for whoever might yet have remained and an invitation to the wild beasts.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XVI

Verses 1-7. From the capital of Moab, there should have been sent a deputation to the capital of Zion with a plea that they evolve a plan by which to admit secretly into the land Moab's women and all others unfit for war, until the war be over. Judah's king would certainly do it, since mercy, truth, and justice are the traits that characterize him. But Moab was too proud and too prideful to do so, although that pride was only imaginary. Therefore will Moab have only itself to blame for its great tragedy.

Verses 8-14. As the prophet beholds the once famous grain fields and vineyards that now lie in ruins with some

of its noted trees scattered in the desert and some finding their way even across the sea, he breaks out in tears over the misfortune that has befallen the industrious people of Moab. When he thinks of the wonderful wine products that have come from there, he cries out, "Wherefore my bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab and my inward parts for Kir-hareseth." Moab's fate has been sealed a long time ago, which neither war nor prayer could help remove, but its miserable end, from which only few will escape, will come within the next three years.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XVII

Verses 1-14. The prophet views the destruction of the Kingdom of Aram simultaneously with that of the Kingdom of Ephraim, since they were in league with one another. The capital of Aram, Damascus, will lie in ruins as will the principal cities of Ephraim, along with their fortifications. As for Aram, it shall no more be a kingdom again, and as for Israel, its glory shall have dwindled, since the bulk of its people will have gone. Indeed, out of the many, they shall now be as few as the ears gathered in the valley of Rephaim, (a non-fertile land.) To those few the enemy will not be able to reach out. It will be then that man will turn to his Maker and will realize the special holiness of Israel, which was contaminated by idolatry. But those cities where God has been forgotten will surely be forsaken, even as in former time under similar circumstances. The disappointment is great, for Israel was a pleasant plant now spoiled; a promising plant, now cut down, driven as in a flooded day; and how extreme is the pain. But the enemy, responsible for Israel's

destruction, though powerful now, will swiftly and suddenly collapse, even as will all future enemies that may rise against him.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XVIII

Verses 1-3. The vision of Israel's ultimate resurrection is continued in this chapter. Even the dark continents of Africa will learn of Israel's renewed glory. Its messengers will be bidden to visit that scattered and downtrodden people, yet so wondrous, even from the very time of its first debut upon the stage of history; a people that continued to hope under the most trying circumstances. As to the civilized world, this revival of Israel will be a matter of first hand knowledge.

Verses 4-7. This rehabilitation was brought about because God paused to look to his own dwelling place, which had weathered the mighty rain and the unbearable heat, to give it some refreshing sunshine in the first instance and some dew in the other. But before the blooming of Israel will ripen into a fruit, all its miserly and extraneous branches will be removed, meaning the undeserved. The remaining product will be that wondrous people who will be brought as a present to God upon Mount Zion.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XIX

Verses 1-4. Egypt was the classic land of idolatry. The various practices of witchcraft and sorcery tended to confuse the minds of its people with all sorts of false ideas. In the case of national catastrophe, therefore, they would not be able to think straight and act effectively. They

would become disheartened and confused, even to the extent of fighting against one another. Thus they would fall an easy prey to the enemy, who would be harsh and cruel.

Verses 5-10. The destruction of the principle industries of Egypt would follow in rapid succession, immediately as the waters of the Nile River were "minished and dried up." In the first place, the irrigation canals would dry up and the grass and crops would wither; the fish would die, making an end to the fish industry as well as to the different net weaving establishments. The irrigation enterprises would cease.

Verses 11-16. Egypt was famous for its wise men and the noted advisers of the Pharaoh. But, as God willed it, a spirit of perverseness overtook them and their counsel was erroneous and stupid. The great man was as uncertain in regard to practical strategy as was the little man. Like frightened women so were the Egyptians.

Verses 17-22. What actually stirred the Egyptians to think that it was God's anger poured upon them, was the miraculous escape of Judah, a land so small compared to Egypt. A group of Egyptian cities on the border toward Palestine, would therefore band together and adopt the Hebrew language and customs and even build an altar to God. One of those cities would be called The City of Destruction, (as a sign that should they become lax in their repentance, destruction would come upon them.) This sincere recognition of God would really save them, even if they had come to it after bitter experience.

Verses 23-25. After receiving their just punishment, both Egypt and Assyria would come to recognize that they must form a triumvirate, with Israel at the head, and Egypt subservient to Assyria in the rank of member-

ship. Israel's spiritual influence upon Egypt and Assyria would be so great that the former would be called God's people and the latter His handiwork, even as Israel themselves are known as God's heritage.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XX

Verses 1-4. That Egypt and Ethiopia would be conquered by Assyria, the prophet saw three years ahead of time, or immediately after Tartan, the Assyrian general, conquered Ashdod. It was then that God bade the prophet pull a tight sackcloth over his loins, and remove his shoes as a twofold sign, (1) to signify the certain collapse of these two countries; (2) to demonstrate their utter nakedness as they were to be led captive into exile.

Verses 5-6. Thus will have fallen the two states upon which Judah depended in case of war with Assyria. This will put Judah to shame for having relied upon them for their hope and glory.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXI

Verses 1-10. The nature of Babylon's disaster was described in a previous chapter. Here, however, the prophet sees the fall of Babylon from a new and rather interesting angle. The enemy, Persia, is moving southwest through the desert upon Babylon. This is a grave vision, for it shows that the "treacherous dealer and spoiler" is overcome by still greater masters in this field which ends through the sighing of a frightened world. And yet that such mighty nations should end their existence in

so miserable a fashion fills the prophet with pain and dismay. But another circumstance turned this event into an awful phenomenon. A watchman was ordered to stand guard, while a great feast was arranged (probably to celebrate Babylon's initial success against its enemy.)Yet there was another watchman on the part of Israel, who had been watching constantly for so many days and nights, in the hope that Babylon's end would come. He heard much noise and agitation against Babylon, but very little in the way of actual attack. And yet, lo and behold! it was indeed thought a small turn of fortune that Babylon fell together with all its idols. This comparison of the two watchmen, one on the part of the thresher of nations, Babylon, and one on the part of the finished product (corn) Israel, was what the prophet had told he heard from the God of Israel.

Verses 11-12. This prophecy concerns Dumah or Edom. The prophet hears the people call to their watchman (or government) about the night (and the probable attack of the enemy). His answer is that there is still a day before that night comes and if they are so anxiously inquiring, then it is time for them to come and organize, for the enemy is sure to come.

Verses 13-17. This prophecy concerns Arabian companies of traveling Dedanites who would lodge overnight in the thickets of Arabia, where they would be supplied with water and bread from the neighboring land of Tema. Now the Temaites will have to do the same to the Arabians, supply them with bread and water, because they have become wanderers. And wanderers they have become because of the very hard fighting that will exact a year of war, brought into their land, diminishing even the last remnants of the mighty men of Kedar.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXII

Verses 1-5. The prophet is overcome by his vision of the ultimate downfall of Judah at the hands of the Chaldeans. He sees the capital joyous, tumultuous, and full of life, and of a sudden they all mount the roofs; the siege is on. More people are dying of hunger than through the sword, and finally the leaders are chained and taken away. The prophet sees the complete disaster of his people, and breaks into bitter tears, refusing any consolation.

Verses 6-14. The prophet, however, is convinced that this catastrophe has not come to pass by mere chance. He therefore proceeds to examine the facts of the situation in detail. The confusion became terrific when the enemy's chariots reached the walls of the city and began to break through. It would seem that Judah had done all it could at this hour of danger; resorting to the reserve ammunition, getting the water supply from behind the wall into the city, breaking in some houses in order to fix the damaged wall; but one thing they failed to do—to look up to their Maker and exhort His help. They even denied the omnipotence of God by doing the opposite—preparing feasts before they would die. Such iniquity could not be forgiven.

Verses 15-24. The prophet sees a similar distrust in God, even in his own day; that was on the part of Shebna and his followers. (According to tradition he meant to deliver King Hezekiah into the hand of the Assyrian king.) He was a high personage and quite powerful, but the prophet dismisses him by foretelling him that in the end, he himself will be carried off into exile. He will lose his high position to another man called Eliakim, the son

of Hilkiah. He will be faithful to the House of David, and everybody from great to small will have complete confidence in him. That such a powerful man as Shebna should fall is only because God willed it so.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXIII

Verses 1-3. This prophecy concerns Tyre. Tyre was a great maritime state, famous for its voluminous trading with many lands. Its defeat at the hands of the Chaldeans can therefore be best appraised by picturing the complete breakdown of its tremendous shipping business. The importing business carried on from the seaport of Tarshish was now in complete ruin. The merchants of Tarshish learned of their plight even before their ships reached Tyre. Of the latter's defeat they learned from the land of the Kittim, a station on their route to Tyre. The prosperous importing and exporting business by the merchants of Zidon and also with the isles around Tyre, likewise came to a standstill. A similar breakdown occurred in the grain trading with Egypt and many other lands.

Verses 4-6. Zidon is in shame, for the sea which has given it such prestige and power has declared itself impotent, since it can no longer carry the trading ships on its waters (giving birth to trade, rearing boys and girls—alluding to export and import trading.) Like the news of Egypt's downfall (also a great trading land) so astonishing was the news of Tyre's downfall. The isles around Tyre will now have to go to Tarshish themselves, for their needs.

Verses 7-9. Happy Tyre, from time immemorial, will now have to wander into exile. But who is responsible for this decree of God? It is the oligarchy of the rich busi-

nessman, whose utter pride will have to be brought low.

Verses 10-14. The sea has turned into a lake for Tarshish, because it lost its strength due to Tyre's (Canaan's) destruction. So has bankrupt Zidon lost its joy. Even with the land of the Kittim it cannot do any business, because it has suffered, though indirectly, such complete ruination at the hands of the Chaldeans, a people who became mighty not through their own efforts and industry, but because Assyria founded it as a harbor for its great ships. Similarly may Tarshish lament its indirect loss of economic strength.

Verses 15-18. But Tyre's downfall will last for not too long a time—only for a period of seventy years, (even as would comprise the rule of only one king, were he to be crowned on the day he was born.) Then Tyre will begin to develop its trade again by all kinds of attractive means, much as a harlot would do it. At the end of seventy years, she would be rehabilitated in her trade once more with all the kingdoms of the earth. The reason for her rehabilitation would be that she would proclaim a change of order. The new order would be a truly democratic one, where the spiritual and holy would precede and pave the way for a righteous distribution of material wealth. The entire business and wealth of the country would not be stored in a few hands, but all inhabitants of the country would enjoy it to the end that such necessities as food and clothing would be plentiful for everybody.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXIV

Verses 1-6. The chapter opens with a prophetic description of Israel's fortunes in the near future and ends

with a vision of world conditions in the distant future. The dispersion of the greater part of the people discomfited the entire country. Organized society ceased; migration and pillage became the order of the day. The land withered away in lonesomeness, as all leadership was cut off. The very land failed its people, because their life was not vitalized by the law of the Torah, the everlasting covenant. That was the curse that consumed the greater part of them.

Verses 7-15. The prophet does not describe a beautiful religious scene no more to be seen, but rather a physical scene that is no more; the wine drinking, the music, and the dancing, all the merriment has ceased in the streets of the Holy Land—to emphasize that by forsaking the spiritual, they lost the physical pleasure for which they aimed. But the remaining few will sing of the glory of God.

Verses 16-23. From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard a song dedicated to the righteous man, but it was a secret for me, for me alone that the world will yet be mishandled by treacherous men, by treacherous men many times over. The world will stumble from one misfortune into another, until it will all be shattered and crumble like a hut, wiping the mightiest countries from off the earth. They will be buried under their own secret plans and accumulation of sin. But the light of the Kingdom of God, that will then be proclaimed from Mount Zion, under the leadership of its wise men, will even put to shame the light of the moon and the sun.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXV

Verses 1-9. The prophet exalts God for that wonder-

ful phenomenon that his advance counsel or warning that the great civilized cities and the palaces in each city of those who acted as strangers toward their fellowmen, would be forever destroyed, and then convinced the mighty and presumptuous nations that they should honor and fear God. It was this blast at the nations that silenced their own blast and made them realize that God meant to be the strength of the poor and meek. The noise of those strangers ought to be brought low, and the song of the presumptuous ones be subdued as is the heat in the shadow of the cloud. The final judgment of the nations will take place at Mount Zion, where some will be declared all innocent and some all guilty. It will also be on that Mount that all the secrecy of the nations and the curtains that screened their designs and plans will be destroyed. It will be then that all death (at human hands) will be destroyed and all tears wiped off, together with the shame in which God's people were always held. On that day it will be realized that Israel's hope was not in vain.

Verses 10-12. Moab is taken as a mere individual example of how its pride will be broken on the day of Judgment at that mountain.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXVI

Verses 1-5. Two conditions will restore Israel's glory: (1) trust in God; (2) faith in God. A refortified land of Judah will yet sing a song upon opening its gate to the righteous, who waited trustingly, whose every thought found support and trust in God; they will yet enjoy the peace in store for them. How worthy it is to trust in God, for His strength is everlasting. Though they be the

mightiest people, He will yet bring them low so that the poor and downtrodden (God's faithful people) will yet tread upon them.

Verses 6-9. Though the righteous man is anxious to walk the straight path, yet must the upright God pave it for him. And though the path be beset by judgment, yet are his hopes to God, his soul yearning is all to His name. Though it be night, yet does my soul yearn toward You; when the world is beset by judgment my soul in me craves, for Your sake, that the people should learn righteousness.

Verses 10-11. But the wicked will never learn righteousness, irrespective of how gracious and congenial their conditions of life may be. God, if they fail to see the raising of Your hand (in punishment) by individual example, let them learn of it in shame when You avenge the wrong done to a whole people (a plea for reward and punishment).

Verses 12-14. God give us peace, for You create the conditions for action, and yet we had faith in Your Name, even when we were forced to the contrary. But let not the dead (wicked) rise again, since You are interested in destroying them.

Verses 15-19. By gathering that people (Israel) unto Yourself, God, You have been honored; Your Name was spread afar to all ends of the world. They pour their prayers to You, even when You reprove them with trouble. We always expect some good to come out from the trouble, but we do not falter, if salvation fails to come. May the dew of Your light fall upon them, so that the dead (the downtrodden) may revive again.

Verses 20-21. The prophet's advice is that the people entrench themselves in their own spiritual life until the

storm is over, for surely God will yet inflict punishment for the innocent blood that was spilled.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXVII

Verses 1-13. When the various biting nations are destroyed, then will a song be dedicated to the vineyard or red wine (Israel). It will then be understood that God had really been watching over Israel. There is no fury or caprice in God; it is simply in a war with thorns that they are burned up. But those who hold to My strength will forever be at peace with Me. The coming days will prove that Jacob is well rooted and that his fruitful accomplishments fill the world. That is why he has not been punished as cruelly as his enemies. With them He dealt harshly, in the same measure and with the same sword destroying them, (even as they meant to destroy other nations.) Jacob's sins consist only in personal contamination with idolatry, which can be removed as soon as they shake loose of it. But the symbol of the fortified city (of other nations) will become entirely forsaken and turn into pasture ground. Even their roots dry up; that is why they break and are deflated so easily. They cannot obtain the mercy of God, because they are entirely devoid of understanding (the purpose of life). Israel will therefore be gathered again into his own land even if they have to be picked out from among the nations one by one.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXVIII

Verses 1-6. The pride of Ephraim is the result of a luxurious and reckless life, and his glory is like a withered flower. Such a life contains within itself the elements

of destruction, which would easily explode, trampling Ephraim's crown of pride under foot. Its destruction would come prematurely, even as a withered fruit that is plucked because it looks ripe before its time. But the real crown of glory will be carried by the remnant of His people, who strive for justice and possess strength of character to fight against false values.

Verses 7-13. It is most unfortunate that even that remnant (of Judah and Benjamin) contains a good many who are primarily interested in a luxurious and over-abundant life. There are really few who are interested in the knowledge of the law and the doctrines of right conduct accumulating in every field of human relationship. It is a strange language to them, when they are told that the weary body craves rest and recreation (and not a fast life.) God's word was to them an unnecessary accumulation of laws and ordinances to be trapped by.

Verses 14-22. Therefore scoffers who are the tone givers of the people listen to the word of God. You seem to be sure that your ideal (of stressing the over-abundant life and denying the higher spiritual values) will resist death itself and no matter what other forces. But in Zion I have founded a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation (a much higher ideal); the faithful will patiently await it. It will consist of justice toward men as well as right-eousness toward God, which will sweep away your ideal of lies and falsehoods. The resistance you claim for your ideal will be broken and the resulting impact will smash you. The disintegration will go on relentlessly, so that the informed will especially be vexed. For your ideal cannot satisfy just like a bed that is too short, and a covering that is too narrow. Though it may be considered strange, yet its destruction is certain. Scoffing

might make it worse, since its end is assured—so did the prophet hear from God.

Verses 23-29. The prophet begs all to listen to him. Does a man forever prepare his ground without ever sowing the various seeds in their proper places? (In planting an ideal, it must contain all the ingredients to satisfy the body as well as the spirit.) He will be punished because of the law (of human nature) which God has taught or implanted in him. Every crop requires its own particular method to release the seed (so does every ideal require the proper methods to put it into practice.) The bread seed will never be ground with the wrong method (an allusion to their false ideals, which also required wrong methods for implementation.) These examples are significant since they too come from God.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXIX

Verses 1-8. Ariel, or Jerusalem, has become a too complacent city; they let their years and holidays pass by aimlessly. But I will distress them a little with fear for the enemy, after which they will be humbled enough to bethink themselves quietly of their apathy. The enemy, of course, will thereupon be destroyed in such a way that he will himself wonder how this certain victory slipped out of his hands.

Verses 9-14. It is worth while for you to stop and wonder how you have become drunk not from wine, but from false ideas. It is as if God Himself has put you to sleep along with your false prophets, and so-called far-sighted leaders. Your false ideas consist in considering the prophetic book as sealed. The one who has studied

it, protests that as for him it is sealed (he fails to understand why he must order life in accordance with its precepts and ordinances.) He who is not learned enough to study it is not interested at all. But they all profess with their mouths and lips that they honor Me, which, of course, excludes the heart and makes their fear of Me only a habit. This will cause a most wondrous thing to happen their—wise and understanding men will be emptied of their wisdom.

Verses 15-21. They deny that God is interested in man's deeds; all is darkness in regard to God. But how contrary it is to the truth, for if God is man's Creator. He is aware of the purpose for which He created him, much as the potter is aware of the purpose for which he created the pot. The Lebanon forest and vineyard both consist of trees which serve different purposes; but their purposes could be easily changed (by their Creator.) On the day when they realize this their eyes and ears will open to understand the words of the book (that if the life of man is purposeful it must be regulated by the precepts of that book.) The humble and the meek (who have never thought differently) will then rejoice with the Holy One of Israel. The arrogant and the scoffer will disappear; likewise will disappear the agitator, the critic, and the pursuer (of the believer in the book as a necessary discipline of life.)

Verse 22. Therefore, says God, Who has redeemed Abraham, (because he has already acted in accordance with the Will of God), the House of Jacob will no more be ashamed. His children will sanctify God's name (through a disciplined life) so that the confused and generally dissatisfied (the class between the extreme scoffers and the humble) will come to understand.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXX

Verses 1-7. The prophet protests against Ephraim as well as Judah, for seeking military aid from Egypt. In the end they will all be ashamed, because Egypt is not even serious about helping them. Meanwhile they are carrying off their treasures to a people which the prophet calls proud and dissipated.

Verses 8-11. The prophet urges them to inscribe indelibly the reason for this mistake. It is because they rebelled and refused to obey God's Torah; they also protested against the correct criticism of the prophet. They would rather have him flatter and fool them, even if this should thrust them off the road which leads to the holiness of God.

Verses 12-14. But this sin of objecting to the prophet's protests against oppression and perverseness will serve to undermine their inner strength, even as a crack in a strong wall would unexpectedly cause the wall to collapse.

Verses 15-18. This inner weakness in turn bred distrust in them of the word of God, that in quietness and confidence would their salvation be. They came to think that their victory would depend as well upon horses and chariots. This, alas, led to their decisive defeat, from which they would but slowly recover. God being a God of judgment, blessed are all who wait for Him!

Verses 19-21. But when they recover in Zion, they will not cry again, as they will readily be heard. Even under adverse circumstances of poverty, they will have confidence in their teacher (prophet) to do as he directs them, whether to the right or to the left.

Verses 22-25. But by the simple act of doing away with the idolatrous cults, their lot would be entirely prosperity and affluence, so that even the (domestic) animal will eat grain, the crop being so abundant. Verily, on the day of victory, nature itself will make peace with Israel. Even the mountains will have enough water fountains and the light will be sevenfold over what it is now.

Verses 26-31. While God's victory would appear quiet and restful to Israel, it would be furious in regard to the enemy; it would constitute a veritable holiday song upon the mountain of God (traditionally the victory over Assyria happened on Passover.)

Verse 32. The victory will be celebrated not only by Israel, but also wherever the Assyrian armies exerted their strength. It will be a spectacle to watch the mighty king slide into his prepared Tophet (hell).

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXI

Verses 1-3. The prophet continues with his condemnation of Israel for seeking aid from Egypt. They have placed their emphasis upon man and his strength (in horses and chariots) and not upon God. They have substituted man and flesh instead of God and spirit which makes their defeat inevitable.

Verses 4-9. To consider but one item in the character of God—God is fearless. When He protects and saves Zion it will be in the same fearless manner as the lion or the bird protects its prey or nest. A plea is therefore made to return to God, for eventually all idol worship will be despised by Israel. Assyria's miraculous defeat will prove what fear will do to great strength: it will prove a consuming fire for the enemy forces.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXII

Verses 1-8. The government, to all intents and purposes, helps mould the character of an individual. A king and his officers are there for the purpose of ruling the country in justice and righteousness. The individual is then influenced to become steadfast, unselfish, and reliable.

All his senses are developed to appreciate that which is correct and ethical. A person is appraised for what he is really worth. The vile person will not pose as the liberal nor the faker as the dignitary. The vile person speaks and thinks only in terms of conniving against man as well as against God, and would not stop to betray even the poorest. Likewise is the faker preoccupied with schemes to deceive the humble and trick the poor. The liberal person, however, will not only think of generosity, but will under all circumstances practice it.

Verses 9-14. The women are reproved by the prophet, perhaps because they bear a good part of man's shortcomings. The very complacent and satisfied women are threatened with a break in their security (what women fear most). They will soon have to bemoan the devastated fields, the forsaken palaces, the once secure cities, all of which will be occupied by the barbaric enemy.

Verses 15-19. This will not last forever. A spirit from on high will eventually descend upon us, and the sections (of people) which in their human relationships could be termed a wilderness, will turn into a vineyard of justice; and where there was a vineyard of justice before their spirit of righteousness will be intensified as is the thickness of a forest. The practice of, and devotion to, justice

and righteousness will be immediate peace and ultimate security. Peace, security, and quiet will characterize their living, "And it shall hail in the downfall of the forest; but the city shall descend into the valley"—an allusion to perfect peace and quietude. There will be an abundance of water both for the crops and pasture land.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXIII

Verses 1-12. The treacherous enemy will not forever continue to fight and terrorize the nations; his turn for similar treatment will come when his allotted time ends. In the meantime we need the graciousness of God, and His daily help in time of trouble. There is terrific commotion that sets nations into flight; God has moved to act that way. Their spoils are gathered in as busily as does the locust its spoils. But our prayer to God on high, is that He fill Zion with justice and righteousness; that our faith during these troubled times serve us as a source of strength, wisdom, salvation, and knowledge, all of which we may gain only through the treasure of fear of God. Heroes are crying openly and ambassadors of peace are weeping bitterly. There is devastation all around; pacts have been broken wantonly; man has lost his dignity. But chaos will not last indefinitely, for God will now arise to reshape the world. Their concepts were just chaff (of the nations) and only stubble could be the result; they were burned by their own thoughts, like broken branches.

Verses 13-14. But many far and near hear and know the following. May the sinners and hypocrites in Zion fear world conflagrations, but the better people of more sterling character will yet see a wonderful government

in a land that still seems far away. Your heart may yet tremble over the absence of the great men of letters and leadership, but the fierce people of deep (guttural) speech, you will not see again. Instead you will see Zion resurrected in peace and everlasting security, in whose "rivers" no fleet will ever sail. This salvation will be brought about by God, Who is our sole judge, lawgiver, king. The fleets will be dissolved; the spoils will be distributed, so that even weak nations will get their share. As for Israel, none of its neighbors will ever say that it was ever hurt by them, as they will be without iniquity.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXIV

Verses 1-17. The prophet is vehement in his description of the inevitable destruction of the nations as an act of revenge for their constant persecution of Israel. He issues a proclamation to this effect, to all the nations and to the whole inhabited world. God's anger will be visited upon them; it will destroy them in a manner that could not be misinterpreted as a normal phenomenon. In fact, their source of life, which is in heaven, will be disrupted (for my sword shall be bathed in heaven), so that their fateful destiny will remain irrevocable. (The sword of God is filled with blood . . . and a great slaughter in Edom.) "For the Lord hath a day of vengeance, and a year of recompense for the controversy of Zion." Its rivers will turn into burning pitch, whose smoke shall never cease in the course of the generations. Their lands will become the habitat of the wildest animals. You can discern it in the Book of God, and read that God has gathered them (beasts) there and that they are worthy

to inherit those lands, to live there for all generations to come.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXV

Verses 1-2. Zion, a wilderness until now, will blossom out like a rose. The Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon will be renewed again in their ancient glory.

Verses 3-10. There will be the weak–kneed and the disheartened, who will grow impatient while waiting for realization. However, that day of reckoning is sure to come together with Zion's resurrection, so that those who prefer to be blind and deaf to Israel's resurgence as a nation will be forced to see and hear, when all the desert places are turned into watered land and roads laid out for the exclusive use of the redeemed people; then will even the fools be convinced. Only everlasting gladness and joy will now be in store for Israel, with no more sorrow and sighing.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXVI

Verses 1-10. It was on the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's rule that Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, waged war upon Judah, and captured all fortified cities. He also sent his chief general Rabshakeh to warn Judah's king that a war cannot be waged with words, but that it requires counsel and strength, both of which he could not expect to come forth from Egypt (Judah's ally). Neither could they rely upon their God, whom the king was so diligently serving. Judah, he continued, is not in a position to compete with the smallest Assyrian officer in point of war equipment, and besides such is the will

of God too (even as all despots believe that God sides with them.)

Verses 11-22. When the three Jewish ministers appealed to him to speak Aramaic instead of Hebrew so as not to frighten the people he became even louder in his warning. He now addressed the people (on the wall) directly by saying that neither would the king nor God, according to the king's assurances, save them, but that if they should surrender they would eventually be transferred to a land as good as theirs. Besides, he would not consider Israel's God mightier than all conquered gods. The three ministers rent their clothes and quietly left him.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXVII

Verses 1-20. Upon hearing the grave news from his ministers, King Hezekiah too rent his clothes and dressed in sackcloth. He sent a delegation of his ministers and the elders of the priests to Isaiah to inform him of the impending danger—the war is about to break out, but wo do not possess the strength to win it, and God must be implored to save the remnant of Israel. Isaiah's reply was reassuring—bad news will now divert the Assyrian king from Judah, and he will eventually be killed in his own land. A declaration of war by the Ethiopian king fulfilled the first part of the prophecy. The Assyrian king, however, sent a written warning to King Hezekiah that he would be back again and that to rely upon his God for help would prove as futile as for the other peoples. King Hezekiah took the written notes from the Assyrian envoys and spread them out in the Temple with a plea to God, Master of all kingdoms, to act in this blasphe-

mous reproach of the Assyrian king. The world must now learn the difference between mere idols and the living God.

Verses 21-38. Thereupon came word from Isaiah that Sennacherib's boastings that he would reach out to the treasured possessions of Israel were worthless; his task as conqueror of nations has come to an end with his present reproach against God. The remnant of Israel (probably a third of the nation, according to the sign of the two fruitless years followed by the third fruitful one) would remain, through the vengeance of God upon his enemies, and for the sake of King David, whose capital was now under siege. Sennacherib's army was killed by an angel of God, and he himself was killed through his own children.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXVIII

Verses 1-8. It was during these momentous days that King Hezekiah took sick, and the prophet Isaiah declared to him in the name of God, that it would end in his death. The King turned toward the wall, and with tears rolling from his eyes he pleaded to God, saying, "Remember how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart and have done that which is good in Thy sight." Thereupon came the word of the prophet, that not only would Jerusalem be saved, but that his prayer had been accepted and another fifteen years would be added to his life. As a sign that he would be given these years, the shadow on the time device that had advanced ten steps at the time of his father's death (tradition) would now recede again.

Verses 9-20. A song of praise by King Hezekiah to

God, on the occasion of his getting well, follows. After giving up all hope of seeing God in "the land of the living" he has been saved. Now that he has been restored to health, he will dedicate his sleeping time to God, instead of sighing from pain. It is only the living who can sing praise to God and appreciate His truth, as well as hand it over to his children. He dedicated the rest of his life to service to God in the Temple.

Verses 21-22. A plaster of figs, according to instructions by Isaiah, healed the boil of the King. The King was not interested in the sign, so long as he could now go up to the House of God.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXIX

Verses 1-7. Upon hearing that King Hezekiah was sick and had become well again, Merodach-baladan, King of Babylonia, sent him greetings and a present. The king reciprocated this friendship by showing the Babylonian envoys all his treasures and possessions. Thereupon came Isaiah with the grave foreboding that this mistaken move on part of the king would eventually mean war and the defeat of the kingdom. (Babylonia would not permit a wealthy and powerful Judah to become stronger, and would destroy it at its first opportunity.) The wealth of Judah would be carried off to Babylonia, and also his children. The King was satisfied so long as there were peace and truth in his day.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XL

Verses 1-5. The prophet is bidden to console Israel, because his punishment doubly exceeds his sins. (The

lesson was already overlearned.) A voice called that all roads beset by mountains or valleys be straightened out. (The conditions for the redemption must be prepared.) God's glory will become obvious to all as these conditions will get into shape.

Verses 6-11. The prophet is bidden to proclaim that man is mortal like the grass, and his kindness, like the flower, is due to fade away, but the word of God has limitless time in which to be fulfilled. Israel's freedom will therefore begin when it will be fearlessly proclaimed to the cities of Judah, Here is your God! Then, in His might, will God come with His reward by gathering in His people with the tenderness of the shepherd that gathers in the young.

Verses 12-18. (There are three forces that man recognizes and fears: (1) nature, (2) mighty nations, (3) idolatrous gods. The waters, the heavens, the earth, the mountains are precisely measured by God, and He knows their nature. Can anyone instruct God in judgment, knowledge and understanding, when the nations are like dust compared to God, when their efforts are always short to merit forgiveness for themselves? Since these nations are absolutely nothing when compared to God, and nature is His own creation, then to whom will you compare Him?

Verses 19-25. The idols are just so much gold or wood. Viewing the vastness and workings of this universe, would you not understand that man is like a grasshopper in his understanding of God? Of what worth are all these pompous rulers and judges when their very existence is so precarious? Therefore to whom will you compare the Holy One?

Verse 26. Raise your eyes to heaven and observe the

celestial world, where in His infinite strength God directs each heavenly body individually. How then can you, Israel, say that God takes no account of you! You could well understand it yourself or learn it historically, that God as the Creator of the universe is tireless, but it is impossible to fathom the particular reason for His giving strength to the very tired and for tiring the very youthful. In general it can be said that the strength is constantly renewed of those who wait upon God.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLI

Verses 1-16. The nations of the world are asked to summon strength, prepare their arguments for the debate.

Who hath raised up the righteous Israel from the east and brought about the downfall of nations in His wake, so that he might bring peace where he was unused to tread before? God, Who calls into being the generations ahead, formed Israel, and resolved their ultimate destiny. From all ends of the earth they proceeded in unison to make war upon Him hammering strong gods for their support. But Israel, My servant, the seed of Abraham, who served Me in love, remained My chosen one, because out of the greatest nations I chose him. Therefore be not afraid, be not afraid, Israel, for I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness, so that none of your enemies can harm you. Be not afraid. Israel; though weak as a little worm, I will make your teeth as sharp as a threshing instrument, where you will grind mountains (nations) into dust. With God you will rejoice in the end.

Verses 17-20. When Israel will be poor and needy

(friendless and forsaken), I will not forsake them (in exile). On mountains and in deserts I will open up for them fountains of water and a variety of goodly trees (they will survive under the most difficult circumstances). This will become a phenomenon for all to observe, to consider and to study and to come to the conclusion that it is nothing but God's hand that has done it.

Verses 21-29. Therefore advance your strong arguments in the debate. All of you nations are groping in the dark as far as the development of historical events is concerned, since you are nothing and only the abominable would trust in you. I provoked a war from the north and from the east; it was proclaimed in my name (a war where mighty rulers were trodden down like clay). Who could foretell aright, and who would be believed that a war where Zion was first proclaimed and good tidings for Jerusalem—that I should suddenly observe that there is no man, no counsellor to remain interested; that their deeds and those of their governments should only lead to wind and confusion—are there arguments to answer in this debate?

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLII

Israel remains God's chosen people, despite their shortcomings and hence their merited redemption.

Verses 1-8. It is My servant (Israel), upon whom I rely; he was chosen by My spirit and inspired by it to set forth a way of life for the peoples. His method is not to be loud with words and agitation; rather through persistent practice of right conduct toward those who need support will he teach his way of life to an anxious world.

God, the Creator of the heavens, the earth, and the soul of peoples, has called upon Israel, in righteousness, to put him as the people of God's covenant, and as a light to the nations, so as to free those who are in darkness. (Without Israel) God's glory would be usurped, and this God does not intend to do.

Verses 9-17. In such case will I foretell things that are far from immediate realization. The prophet bids the whole world to sing a new song in praise to God over this magnificent news. Like a hero and man of war, will God overpower His enemies in His vengeance, though He has refrained for too long; the earth will be scorched in His wake. His people will surely be freed and their darkness turned into light, to the shame of those who support themselves on false ideas (idolatry) in dealing with Israel.

Verses 18-25. My servant (Israel) is far from perfect, failing to appreciate the greatness and purpose of the Torah. As a people they are quite spoiled and depreciated, because their youth is spoiled and hopelessly segregated from them. Their unfortunate position in this world is the result of their refusal to walk in God's way and observe His Torah. Therefore this burning fire around them, and yet their persistent indifference.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLIII

Verses 1-8. Although the prophet blamed Israel for failure to live up to their great ideal yet they are to banish all fear, lest it interfere with their existence. They have been designated by God as His people, therefore neither water nor fire will destroy them. Besides, if they

are marked for destruction, there are other peoples to take their place, since they have earned it so much more. Israel, however, will remain God's dear, honored and loved people. Also, in regard to His redemption, they need have no fear. Every Israelite who would associate himself with God's name, will be redeemed, regardless of where he may be. He will enhance God's glory, for though as a people they may now be blind and deaf, they possess eyes and ears (to understand and rally when the occasions comes.)

Verses 9-15. Historically there is no nation that could claim personal affiliation to God. The situation is different with Israel. Their entire history bears witness to the existence of One God, for it is that God that has always assured them of salvation, even up to the last coming event of the defeat of the Chaldeans. It is the Holy One of Israel, Creator and King.

Verses 16-21. Israel's historical affiliation with God could even be begun with the wonders at the sea (Red Sea), but there is no need to dwell on this now, for something new is in the making. The wilderness will be turned into a watered habitat for My chosen people, a people which I have created for Myself, so that they may relate My praise to the world.

Verses 22-28. Of course Israel is not blameless. It was not God's purpose to tire them with services. In the final analysis the cost involved, for instance, in the sacrifice service is negligible. But they have tired Him with their actions since (to bring big sacrifices but to miss their lofty purpose.) The sins, however, will finally be wiped out for God's sake, but you can not argue that their accumulation should not have brought down just punishment upon Israel.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLIV

Verses 1-5. Israel may have sinned, but remained God's servant and His chosen people, worthy of God's aid (to be extricated from occasional failings.) Therefore, be not afraid, my basically righteous people, for I will pour My spirit upon your offspring, even as I do water upon the dry ground. They will blossom out when under unfavorable conditions, and they will fall into three classes:

(1) those who dedicate their lives entirely to God (the religious class).

(2) those who stress their affiliation with the nation (the nationalistic class).

(3) those who emphasize the importance of both these objectives (the religious-national class).

Verses 6-8. I, Israel's King and Redeemer, am the first and last and there is no God besides Me. In the experience of man, there is none like me to have foretold and controlled the trend of events. Therefore, be not fearful (that you will be lost among the nations), for you can bear witness to My Omnipotence that there is no force that I should not be aware of (that could crush you.)

Verses 9-20. As far as the idols are concerned, this is less than nothing. It is ridiculous and senseless to see a man create his god in his own image, out of a piece of wood, half of which he uses to cook his meal and warm up by, and the other half to fashion a god. Those people are without eyes and without heart to be so ignorant and stupid.

Verses 21-28. But Israel must not forget its God, the Forgiver of sins and Redeemer, who takes pride in

Israel. The sole Creator of the universe is capable of frustrating the vicious designs of the plotter and "wise men", and to establish the promise of His messengers (prophets), that Jerusalem will be resurrected and the Temple rebuilt through Cyrus.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLV

Israel is the medium through which God chose to make Himself known in this world.

Verses 1-8. The supreme strength which will be displayed by Cyrus as a conqueror, will be due to the fact that God specifically called on him for Israel's sake. His name was pronounced before time to demonstrate the chosen quality of Israel and he was vested with great strength to demonstrate the Omnipotence of God. Moreover, God forms light (when the situation requires it), and creates darkness (ready for those who would invite it); makes peace (when the situation requires it), and creates evil (ready for those who would invite it). But of righteousness and salvation there is an abundance, as the skies pour it down and the earth opens up to bring it forth.

Verses 9-25. Woe unto him who would quarrel with His Creator regarding the entire purpose of his being created. It is as preposterous as would such an argument be on part of the clay toward its fashioner, or even as one would protest against his father and mother for giving birth to him. I am asked about the ultimate destiny of man, My children (Israel), and the creation generally. Such was My will to create the universe and men in it. I aroused him too (Cyrus) in righteousness and of his own free will to liberate my exiles and to make peoples,

out of appreciation for Israel, profess that Israel's is the only God. God is indeed hidden, only He becomes manifest as Israel's Saviour. All idol-worshippers and idol-makers will go down in shame, but Israel will never be shamed, as its salvation will be everlasting, coming from God. But the creation of the universe and having people in it, remains only God's concern and none else's.

Verses 19-25. It was not, however, in a secret and dark place and of futile things that I spoke to Israel, but of righteousness and right principles, unlike the dregs of the peoples and their helpless gods. It could not be denied that since time immemorial, "I was the righteous God and the Saviour, with none besides Me. I swear that eventually the entire world will recognize and bow down to Me". But along with God Israel too will be recognized as the nation that has found righeousness and strength in God, and really then will Israel glory in God.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLVI

Verses 1-5. In case of defeat in war, the idols are overtaken by the same fate. They are loaded upon the animals and carried away into exile, together with their worshipers. Israel, however, has been carried by God from its very inception as a people, and will be so carried to eternity. Could there be any comparison then between God and anything else?

Verses 6-13. They fashion a god of gold and carry it upon their shoulders. Could it be of any help, when it is itself an inanimate and helpless thing? When will you remember this and overpower your treacherous heart? Remember that from the earliest times, God, through

His Omnipotence, has directed the trend of events as He wills it, even to the last forthcoming event regarding the flight of the ravenous bird (Cyrus) from the East. The stouthearted, who are far from righteousness, may hear that it is My righteousness which I am bringing near—it will be salvation to Zion and to Israel My glory.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLVII

Verses 1-5. A prophesy concerning the fate of Babylonia. Babylonia is now lowered to the ground; she will no more be called the tender and delicate. Her nakedness and her shame are now uncovered, as she marches irretrievably into exile. Such was the decree of our Redeemer, the Holy One, of Israel, that Chaldea should no more be known as the chief of kingdoms.

Verses 6-15. It was in a moment of anger that I delivered My people into your hands, but you have treated them without mercy. It never occurred to you that the singular role you play may end, and the bitter consequences of your complete dissolution as a kingdom may follow. But this has come upon you despite, or because of, your unshaken confidence in your wisdom and knowledge and your presumably unrivaled strength. Your sudden misfortune is inexplicable; perhaps you ought to hold on relentlessly, as you are used to from your very youth, to your various enchantments, sorceries, stargazers, and the like. Their advice might help you. But alas! they could not even save themselves from the fire and flame. How wasted was the money that you paid them, when in your time of distress there was none to help you.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLVIII

Verses 1-13. The two tribes of Benjamin and Judah profess faith in God, but without truth or righteousness. In the event of trouble, they rely solely upon the Holy City and the God of Israel. But in order to implant true faith in you, I would suddenly foretell a coming event, because I know that you were obstinate and would attribute it to the gods if it were begun already. While you well know that those events were all realized, I now inform you of a new event of which you have not known before this, since I know that you have been treacherous from your very inception as a people. It was for My sake, and to preserve My glory, that I kept My anger and taught you through bitter experience and patiently to have faith in Me. Therefore should you know that I am the first and the last and the Creator of this punctual universe.

Verses 14-16. You may all listen to this yet unknown event of the successful rise of Cyrus and the fated fall of Babylonia. The prophet asserts here that he did not begin by revealing this event secretly (for fear it might not come true), but as soon as it was decreed and God's spirit sent him (he made it public).

Verses 17-22. God is now ready to teach Israel the way of a useful life, when they will be happily freed from the Chaldeans. Were they however to have listened to the precepts, they would now have peace and righteousness, and so many of the people (ten tribes) would not have been destroyed. (But mind also this reason for the defeat of the Chaldeans: "There is no peace", said the Lord, "unto the wicked.")

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLIX

Verses 1-6. The prophet addresses the remotest parts of the world to inform all that his destiny as a prophet had been decided upon by God, yet before he was born. He received both his eloquence and his protection from God, Who was proud of him as Israel's representative. He had thought that all his efforts were in vain, but had left the final decision and the worth of his accomplishments to God. His task was not only to turn Israel back to God, but also to serve as a light for the nations the world over.

Verses 7-13. Thus saith God, "Israel who is now despised and abhorred, will yet have kings and ministers rise and bow down before him." Also in the propitious time will God answer him, and in that day of salvation will He help him to resurrect his country, and to acquire the desolate lands. Then will be the time to order the imprisoned ones to leave their dark places, for the paved roads that lead to their land. They will thus gather from all four ends of the earth in joy and happiness.

Verses 14-23. Zion might have said that God had forsaken her, but more than a mother would not forget her offspring, would God not forget her, as she is actually engraved upon the palms of His hands. But your children must hasten (not to miss the propitious time), and your destroyers must leave you. Then will they all gather in happy mood to rebuild the wasteland to a point where the land will be crowded on all sides. How surprised will the land be to find itself turned from emptiness and desolation into a teeming country. Whoever will yet

remain in a foreign land will be brought with honor by those rulers into Zion.

Verses 24-26. Is it possible to take the prey from the mighty? But this will come to happen. Moreover, your betrayers will dearly pay for their manipulations, so that all may know that God, the Mighty One of Jacob, is Israel's Saviour and Redeemer.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER L

Verses 1-3. Thus said God: Have I deliberately sent you away, as would a man his wife, or sold you out to any creditors? If you find yourself in such a position, it is due to your own iniquities. I have come many times to deliver you, but you have not answered my call. Had it occurred to you that I could not cope with all the obstructions provided by nature which your enemies employed to block your redemption? Indeed, at my rebuke, nature itself will retreat from its normal functioning—the seas will dry up, the rivers will turn into desert land, the heavens will darken.

Verses 4-7. God has bestowed upon me, says the prophet, a fluent language so that I might feed the tired spirits at the proper time. I did not flinch from my task, even at the risk of being physically harmed, or cheaply insulted. In fact I have never felt insulted, for with God's justification there could be none to condemn me. The advice of the prophet is that those who fear God and trust in His prophet, should have faith even if things are unclear to them. The people who are protesting or insulting, with sparks of fire coming out of them, will themselves be burned by that fire—which will put a sad end to their lives.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LI

Verses 1-8. The people of Israel are here called, "the followers after righteousness and the seekers of God." They are bidden to look back to their first ancestor, Abraham, and his wife Sarah, whom God singled out (because of these qualities) for the express purpose of developing the people of Israel out of them. Zion will therefore have to be comforted, to the extent that its wastelands will turn into a garden of Eden, and be filled with gladness and joy and song. It must be well understood that My Torah, and My authority will have to become the light of the nations, before they be quieted. My righteousness and My salvation will have to come forth, for the peoples of the world will look to My authority to settle their grievances. Such is the nature of My righteousness, that sooner would heaven and earth and all its inhabitants be destroyed, than would it. Therefore, need not fear those who understand righteousness, the people in whose heart My Torah resides. The reproaches and revilings which may be flung at them are brief against my everlasting righteousness.

Verses 9-16. A moving appeal is now made by the prophet to God, that redemption and promised joy be hastened. God's answer is that Israel should think of its worth (as a people), and banish all fear of mortal man. The fury of the oppressor will be dissipated and under the protection of Almighty God his people will become as steadfast as the heavens and earth.

Verse 17. But the prophet, as a realist, beholds the sad picture of Israel's plight and laments bitterly the fact that even after the people have drunk the cup of poison

to its very end, still there is no leadership to extricate them from their catastrophic condition. Like an ensnared buffalo, so are they in a fainting spell.

Verses 21-23. But though afflicted and in a daze, yet will God himself assume the cause of His people. He will take that cup of His fury out of Israel's hands and put it into the hands of their tormentors.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LII

Verses 1-6. Zion is bidden to assume its rightful strength, and Jerusalem, the Holy City, its glory, for it will no more be invaded by the uncircumcised and unclean. She may relax, for she owes nothing to anybody, since she has done no wrong to any of the nations that she was sold to, or bore whose yoke. So was it in the case of Egypt, and so is it now in the case of Assyria and Chaldea. This, therefore, constitutes enough reason for God not to tarry, for in so doing, Israel is irked and God's name constantly blasphemed.

Verses 7-10. The prophet is overwhelmed over the wonderful prospect when, upon the mountains of Zion, peace and salvation will be proclaimed; when it will be seen that God again restores Zion, and all the nations will see God's great strength displayed.

Verses 11-12. Israel is bidden to leave in a state of purity with the vessels of God, but without haste. God will guard their front and rear (and then they owe nothing to anyone).

Verses 13-15. My servant (Israel) will then be at the height of his success. Instead of expressions of sympathy over his marred appearance, nations will be astounded over his unrivaled prominence.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LIII

This chapter must be understood in accordance with the sentiments expressed by Isaiah in verse six, Chapter XLVII.

Verses 1-12. The reverberations following the extraordinary ascendancy of Israel, described in the preceding verses, are continued here. The nations will be astounded at the rise of Israel, whom they have heretofore considered weak, colorless, and unlovely. They looked upon him as despicable, without personality, a sick and painful organism, deserving no consideration and not to be reckoned with. The nations will then learn that it was they who were sick (with hatred), it was they who were in pain (from rage), and this was the cause of Israel's suffering. They will then be convinced that it was not as they thought, that Israel was doomed by God to be stricken and afflicted. They will learn that Israel was trembling and crushed, purely on account of their treacherous sins (to find in him an outlet for their hatred and rage); Israel was the target of the persecutions in peacetime, and in injuring that nation they thought to find the cure for the troubled times. They will then bethink themselves how they have strayed, each one haunting him in his own way, when really he was merely the target of our sins. Yet with all the persecution and oppression, it would accept its fate quietly. There was no authority or justice to protect Israel, and who can name the generation that was not cut off from the land of the living? Each nation will then realize, and say: Israel's plague was due to the sins of My people. Israel was sentenced to die either because accused of being wicked or

wealthy, when really free of either violence or deceit. God's objective in permitting this crushing grief was to see if Israel would put the blame upon itself, (and retain faith in God). As a reward the nation would see seeds and its days would be prolonged (quite the contrary of the nation's objective) and God's desire would be fulfilled through it. The travail of Israel's soul satisfied the conviction that it had really demonstrated in public the role of the righeous by carrying the burden of their sins. But for its readiness to die over these indignities, will its reward be to share the wealth with the many and the mightiest.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LIV

Verses 1-13. There will be cause for the heretofore barren land to sing and rejoice, for it will be filled with more people than another, at-all-times populated land. The land would be build on a steadfast and permanent basis and pushed even beyond its extremities, for there would be no fear of ever experiencing another disaster. Moreover, the shameful past would be completely forgotten, as God would call back His people, as does a husband his newly married wife after a brief quarrel. My leaving you will appear just a small moment, against the great mercies with which I will take you back. For just an angry moment have I hid My face from you, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says God, your Redeemer. It is God's oath, as the flood in Noah's time, that even were the mountains removed, yet will God's kindness and covenant of peace with Israel not be removed. Precious stones will adorn your edifices

and all your children will be God's scholars, among whom peace will reign.

Verses 14-17. A righteous economic order will be established. This will remove your fear and the recourse to economic oppression. Only those who exclude Me, will have to fear. But whoever has quarreled with you, will now readily agree with you. Moreover, I am behind the creation of both—the inplements of construction and destruction—and it is therefore My assurance to you that no implement of destruction would ever be fashioned successfully against you.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LV

Verses 1-5. An appeal is made by the prophet to heed God's word, which one can learn gratis, rather than to pay a high price for information that is essentially misleading. The genuine knowledge is compared to water, wine, and milk. This knowledge will revive your soul and cause the formation of an everlasting covenant with God, in which the durable mercies promised to King David will be reassured to you. He was to be an example to the nation, and as their irresistible commander (of right conduct) so will your role be even toward peoples that know you not.

Verses 6-13. But how does God work it one way or the other? The prophet offers a glimpse into this mystery.

God should be sought when He is still to be found, being yet near the individual. Even though wicked, yet God waits upon him, to change his ways and his mind, and is ready to forgive him and shower His mercies upon him. It should be understood that God's thoughts or aims, and His ways or methods, are as far away from

man's as is heaven from earth. God's course of action is never deflected, but will always realize its original purpose, even as the rain and snow will cause the seed to grow, inexorably. Now, that word which God sends out will always fulfill the double purpose, never to miss; namely, it will hit whom God desires (to punish) and will bring fortune to those who have earned it. (The rain and the snow, too, may imply as much.) Such will be the eventual joy upon the return of the exiles when even nature itself will rejoice. Instead of the thorn and brier, there will come up the fir tree and the myrtle tree. This is the everlasting sign of the effect of God's word.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LVI

Verses 1-8. Israel is bidden to keep the law and do justice, because God's salvation is near (and depends on it.) The highest positive attainment for the blessed individual is to observe the Sabbath (which affirms his faith in God), and on the negative side, it is to guard against all evildoing. In choosing this way of life, one must not worry over the effectiveness of his immediate contribution, like the stranger, who feels detached from the nation, despite his voluntarily joining it, or his lack of future usefulness, like the eunuch. Observing the Sabbath, choosing the things desired by God, and adhering to His covenant, will produce lasting effects, more than could sons and daughters. Their full participation in the services at the Temple and their rejoicing would be open to them, even as it would be to all the nations. It is certain that there will be such that will voluntarily join Israel's ranks.

Verses 9-12. The immediate situation, however, shocks

the prophet. Israel's leaders are all like sleeping but arrogant dogs. They would not forewarn the others of the danger, but would be awake enough to gather in, each one, all possible, and to try yet harder the next day.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LVII

Verses 1-2. The righteous perish and also the kind people, but nobody seems to think or understand the simple reason behind it—it is because of the accumulated evil, (in such a world the righteous are excessive). But in their death, those upright find peace.

Verses 3-21. The prophet now directs his attack against the "sons of the sorceress and the illegitimate children." Being what they are, sinful and false, against whom are they shouting with such vehemence and pleasure? They who warm themselves by strange gods (or idols), who are actually offering their children to them, who are combining their fate with them—could God find reason to pardon them? Your interests are now behind the door and the past (which stores Israel's ideals); you have widened your bed (comparing them to the whore) to take them (strange cults) in, but actually it is their bed that you desire at every opportunity. Your gifts and your graces are directed toward the highest places (kings). There, regardless of distance, is where you send your messengers, but how you debase yourself even to the grave. You exert all effort without ever faltering. You find there a source for your livelihood, therefore it will not sicken you. But why the worry and the fear to the point of denying Me (God); have I not always quieted your enemies and still you fear Me not? I will pronounce the quality of your righteousness and the merit of your

deeds, and it will not help you (to cling to strange cults). When you cry out, do your circles of friends try to save you? May the wind and vanity carry them away, but reliance upon Me will make the land and My holy mountain their inheritance. Let, therefore, the way of My people be paved and smoothed, and all stumbling blocks be removed, for the High and the Holy One is forever interested in reviving the spirit of the humble and the downtrodden. God will not always quarrel and be angry, for after all the souls are His work and they are bound to come to nestle in Him. Israel's sins stem from this anxiety to amass (means to live by), but this has caused confusion and overt and hidden punishment. But Israel will be healed and consoled, and the new expression will be peace, peace to far and to near.

But the wicked ones, whose emotions are as stormy as the sea and who insist in muddling things up, will have no peace, as such is God's decree.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LVIII

Verses 1-12.The prophet is bidden speak to the people aloud and incessantly about their sin of pretending falsely to yearn for God and for the just and righteous life which He demands. In case they call a fast day over some trouble, they are bitterly disappointed if the situation remains unchanged. They fail entirely to grasp the significance of the fast day. To them it is a day off in which they can attend to odds and ends, collecting old debts, and generally to get together and pick a quarrel. Is even this the purpose of a day in which a person afflicts his soul? That he should walk with his head bent down like a hook and have under him sackcloth and ashes?

No, the purpose of a fast day is to quit all evil practices, to free the oppressed, to feed the hungry, to bring the destitute into your home, to clothe the needy, and not to look away from (the needs of) your family and relatives. Such action will bring you light, health, and the expected response from God. Not pointing a threatening finger and provoking your friends, but kind, comforting words to the disheartened will imbue you with strength and with sustaining vigor. This is the way in which a world can be built and firm generations established.

Verses 13-21. In emphasizing strongly the duties of man to man, the prophet warns also of fulfilling the duties toward God. He pleads that the Sabbath should be strictly observed as a day of spiritual pleasure, and not to do any work in it. The reward will be great spiritual elevation, and enjoyment of the heritage of Jacob, the land and its material prosperity.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LIX

Peace and redemption will necessarily follow a just and righteous life, but will inevitably be blocked by a sinful life. This is God's righteous law. But, when He finds it necessary and justifiable He will go beyond the law.

Verses 1-15. God is forever ready to help and to listen, but it is your sins that cut you off from His aid. Your hands are soiled in blood. You speak lies and perverseness. None calls for justice or for truth. You are deceiving and false. Your thoughts are mischievous and your deeds iniquity. Your ideas are like the eggs hatched out by the poisonous snake, and the philosophy that supports your ideas is as sturdy as the spider's web; those eggs

(ideas) are deadly and the web (or philosophy) will never cover up their deeds (which follow these ideas), since they are deeds of iniquity and violence. They are spurred on to run after evil, to shed innocent blood; it is their treacherous thoughts that bring misfortune in their wake. In their selfish ways they have lost the way to peace and justice. This has become so far from them that they cannot even hope for it. They are groping for it, but like blind ones, they roar like bears, grumble like doves, but still salvation is far. It is our deliberate sins of transgressing and lying against God, speaking oppression and thinking falsehood, that are responsible. In fact justice and truth will not even dare approach them. Truth is absent to the point where the honest person would be considered stupid.

Verses 16-21. God saw this hopeless situation and it displeased Him. Upon seeing, in shocking surprise, that there could be found no man to intervene (to bring about a change in the situation), He asserted His own strength, which was sustained by righteousness, like a valiant warrior, to take grim revenge of His enemies in accordance with their deeds. This manifest annihilation of his enemies would then of itself result in Zion's redemption, and even of those who repent from their transgression. (On the positive side too, God's action would be justified,) as for Me, My covenant was with them, and so was My spirit and My word, the Torah which would never really depart from them.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LX

Verses 1-7. The light of God's glory will rise over Zion at the time when the nations of the world yet grope

in darkness. The nations will recognize you and accept you as a shining example. It will be then that your sons and daughters, too, will be coming from all about you. You will be delighted, surprised, and well satisfied upon beholding the heavy load of presents that will be sent you by sea and land, both to congratulate you and as offerings in the Temple.

Verses 8-22. It will seem as if they were coming flying on the clouds or like doves to the windows. It will be the hope of your sons on the farthest isles to get their gold and silver together so that they may return and enjoy Israel's rebuilt home and renewed glory. The change will be extreme, since it was in My wrath that I smote you and in My desire to have mercy on you. Your gates will never have to be closed, since the nation who would not submit to you would perish. Even those who despised you will now recognize you as the Zion of Israel's Holy One. As hated as you were, so glorified will you be; the best of all the peoples will be yours, so that your prosperity will exceed in every field. Your officers and agents will carry out their tasks peacefully, as there will be no violence or depression in your borders. God's glory over you will exceed the light of the sun and moon, never to be extinguished. So will the people be all righteous, God's glorious handiwork. Great numerically and spiritually will you become, and when the time comes all this will be quickly realized.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LXI

Verses 1-11. The prophet avers that he is inspired with the spirit of God and especially dedicated for the purpose of bringing liberty to the meek, the broken

hearted, and the imprisoned. To proclaim a year of reconciliation and a day of revenge, that would be of some consolation. To bring some beauty and joy into their lives, so that they could stand out and be appreciated. To enable them to rebuild the age old wasteland and to resurrect the desolate cities, that were so for many generations. After the economy is established in field and vineyard outside help would run it, so that God's people could dedicate their lives to real spiritual activity, which would bring them the glory that others had enjoyed until then. Since their shame was of a double portion, their recompense in land possession and everlasting joy is bound to be of a double portion, because God loves justice and hates the robbing of those who have sacrificed all. They will therefore get the full measure of recompense, and in a way that whoever sees them, not to mention the nations generally, would soon recognize in them "that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." In God will they then rejoice, and they will be as outstanding in righteousness as the bridegroom in his ornamental cloths and as the bride in her jewels. As the seed begins to sprout in the garden, so will righteousness and praise begin to sprout again before all the people.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LXII

Verses 1-5. The prophet asserts categorically that he will not quiet down, neither will he rest until Zion's righteous cause is realized. All the nations will have to recognize that righteous cause and the glory that goes along with it. The situation will have changed to such a degree that a new name (in conformity with God's will) will be designated for Israel and His land. Instead

of being called "Forsaken," Israel will be called Hephzibah (My delight is in her) and instead of Desolate, the land will be called Beulah (Espoused.)

Verses 6-9. But the watch over Zion will not end with the prophet. "Such watchmen," he declares, "I have appointed for all time." They are to give the Almighty no rest till He reestablishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth. Moreover, God too has sworn that the time is due when Israel itself, and not strange nations, will enjoy the products of its endeavors.

Verses 10-12. The prophet is so certain of the triumph of his cause that he calls jubilantly to prepare the way for the people and to raise a flag over all the nations (as a symbol of triumph). God's recompense has come at last. Israel will be called the Holy people and Zion "Sought Out."

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LXIII

Verses 1-6. The prophet beholds a warrior clad in colorful and glorious uniform moving about with great strength. He comes from the direction of Edom (Israel's eternal enemy). Upon the prophet's inquiry, who is it and why is his uniform stained red, the answer, immediately recognized by the prophet as God's, is that he speaks in righteousness, mighty to save. The nations, without exception, refused to take heed as their punishment began. This aroused God's anger, it being a day of revenge and a year of redemption, from which no nation could escape. The resort to punishment and the subsequently increased anger of God came as a result of the utter indifference of any nation to help or support Israel's cause, which astounded God. He therefore used His own arm to help and His wrath for support.

Verses 7-9. This was indeed a special kindness of God toward the House of Israel, since He knew that they would never belie Him. He suffered, so to speak, with them, but kept them forever safe through a special angel.

Verses 10-19. It is true that they revolted against God, whereupon He turned into their fighting enemy. But so is it true—laments the prophet, upon beholding the agony of the exile—that of old there was a Moses to perform wonders before them and to inspire them with the spirit of God's holiness. The prophet implores God to look down from heaven and behold that if not for His zeal and His mercy Israel would be completely friendless, with not even their fathers Abraham and Jacob to take their part. No less was it God's own fault, complains the prophet, that we have strayed, for too brief was our independence as a nation, though we have been forever Your people and accepted Your rule and power which You especially manifested to us.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LXIV

The prophet continues with his challenge and prayer to God.

Verses 1-6. There was a time when you manifested your power through the mighty forces of fire and water. These wonders which no human eye but Yours could visualize, caused the nations to tremble before You, while it inspired those who confided their hope in You. You might have become angry because of our sins, but You met those righteous ones who rejoiced over and appreciated Your ways; in them You saw the world as worthy to be saved. But now we have all become unclean and so is our righteousness like a filthy ray; we fade away like

a leaf, and, like a wind, so are we swept away by our own sins. And now if there is none to call upon Your name and to be stirred in his clinging to You, it is because You have hid Your face from us (by failing to manifest Your extraordinary powers) and thus were we consumed by our sins.

Verses 7-11. The prophet implores God to see what has become of Zion and Jerusalem—burned and turned into wasteland—and asks if God can yet restrain Himself from bringing His peace, and continue to affect us so severely.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LXV

Verses 1-7. The prophet's reproach that God has hidden His face from His people is denied. I was anxious to be sought, I was accessible, says God, but to a people who were disinterested and who cared not to call on Me. My hands were spread out to them continually, but they rebelled, pursuing an unhealthy course in accordance with their own ideal. Despite the fact that they would indulge in idolatrous cults and contaminate themselves by eating swine's flesh and all other abominations, they still assumed "holier than thou" attitudes. These sins committed by them and their fathers are written before Me; I will not keep silent until they receive their just punishment.

Verses 8-25. But as in the cluster is found the wine (besides the husk and kernel), which blessing saves it from being destroyed, so will My servants not all be destroyed. There will yet be enough in Judah to deserve My inheritance, and to make the greatest use of it, even after those who have not heeded My call be destroyed.

The transgressors themselves will yet witness the great era of prosperty and happiness, much to their own shame and heartache. God will be recognized as the true God, since the transformation will be of such magnitude that all former troubles will be forgotten. There will only be rejoicing and joy for Jerusalem and its people and never any weeping or crying. There will be longevity of years in which time they will enjoy completely their own prosperity, without ever toiling in vain, in that others would enjoy it. I will always be answering their call, even before it be issued. The change would affect even the wild animals, who would act like tame domestic animals in their behavior and even in choice of food.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LXVI

Verses 1-4. God's throne is in the heavens and the earth He uses as His stool. Is it then possible to build a house for God to provide Him with comfort? If God is the Creator of the whole universe, then there must be something definite that He is aiming for. Yes, His attention is turned toward the one who cherishes and is inspired by His word, despite His poverty and contrite spirit. To choose the sacrifices and consider them an end in themselves is like choosing a dog or a swine as a sacrifice—an abomination and a delusion. This is choosing exactly what God does not desire. Now the really pious will yet see that those who claim to be honoring God (through these elaborate and empty ceremonies), will yet suffer shame while they rejoice. The city, the Temple, re-echo the voice of God, that He will render recompense to His enemies.

Verses 7-24. But what will the reward be? Zion will

apparently give birth to its children at once. It is God's purpose that pain and suffering must affect creation, even as the pain and suffering of the woman brings forth her offspring. Those who mourned Zion, will bring about its joy. The joy will be satisfying, for it will be in peace and in international honor. As a man is consoled by his mother, so will God console Israel, through Jerusalem. But the enemies of God will be wiped out by fire and storm the idolators and those who contaminate themselves with swine flesh and other abominations. How well God knows their deeds and their thoughts. But in the end they themselves will serve as the symbol to all nations, demonstrating His glory, and through them will the scattered in Israel be brought back to Jerusalem. It will be then that their existence will be as steadfast as the renewed heavens and the renewed earth. (Their fame will be such) that on frequent periods (new moon and Sabbath) all flesh (foreign peoples will come to pay their respects in the Temple. They will also make a pilgrimage to the dead transgressors to be impressed with their utter abhorrence.

JEREMIAH I

Verses 1-3. The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. He prophesied during the reign of three kings, beginning in the 12th year of Josiah's reign, through Jehoiakim, and ending in the 12th year of Zedekiah's reign and the Jerusalem exile.

Verses 4-10. The prophet begins by relating God's first message to him, that he was dedicated to be a prophet unto the nations even while yet in his mother's

womb (genius is born). The prophet shied away from his mission because of his youthfulness, but acquiesced upon God's insistence. It was stipulated by God, however, that only if he banished all fear, would he be saved (character must be developed by the individual). The prophet felt God's hand touching his mouth, (a spiritual inspiration), and vesting him with the mission of destroying and building (four words are used to express the former and two the latter).

Verses 11-17. He then perceived two things: (1) a rod of an almond tree; (2) a seething pot facing northward. God's interpretation of the former was that he hastens his plan into execution, (playing on the similarity of the Hebrew words "almond," and "hasten," and the latter indicating the evil coming from the North (the physical senses were here to corroborate with the spiritual perceptions to accentuate the gravity of the situation.) The hastening of the evil from the north meant that Babylonia was threatening the Jewish state. This, as a result of their evil deeds and idolatrous practices. Again he is bidden to be firm, since fear of the king, his officers, and people would surely break him. But with God's help, he will overcome all difficulties through firmness and fearlessness.

JEREMIAH II

Verses 1-3. Jeremiah's reproof, that follows, is sharp and cutting, but he tempers it when he begins a summation of Israel's ultimate worth. God will forever remember Israel's kindness when they followed Him through the arid wilderness. Israel has thus been sanctified; their

persecutors are condemned, evil is sure to come upon them.

Verses 4-20. The prophet summons all the families of Israel to listen to his indictment. Wherein has God failed, that Israel has retreated so far from Him, to go after vanity and to become vain? Why have the two great historical events failed to impress them? (1) Their having been taken out of Egypt, and (2) being led across a wilderness into such a fruitful and abundant land. Why have they contaminated my land? They, the priests, the learned men of Torah, the shepherds (kings), and the false prophets! This will be the topic of debate between God and yourselves, holding over to your grandchildren. Indeed, such a change of heart even toward their deluded gods could not be found in any nation, and Israel has exchanged His glory for helplessness. O, how are the very heavens astonished over this! (1) to forsake the buoyant source of fresh water, and (2) to attempt to gather water into broken cisterns. Has Israel the mentality of a slave? Why has it fallen so low, (and the consequences are so imminent)? Already are the lions (enemies) roaring, the cities are ruined, without people. How futile to rely upon Egypt or Assyria when you know that your own wickedness is the cause of your undoing. How bad and bitter is it to forsake God and relinquish His fear, when you know that He was forever at your side to help.

Verses 21-30. And originally you were planted as a noble branch—how you have degenerated! This is a stain that can never be removed—denying it will not help. In turning wild and persistent, you acted as if you had given all up, remaining heedless to the threat of eventual suffering. The prophet sees the embracing of the foreign

cults—as many as are the cities in Judah—by the highest dignitaries—as shameful as a supposedly honest man caught as a thief. But they still have the effrontery to protest when punished, though in vain.

Verses 31-37. The prophet appeals to his generation to reconsider. Has God been to Israel a wilderness, or a dark land from which they thought it best to depart? Is it not as if a maid forgot her ornaments and a bride her attire? You have put out your best step to seek (strange) love, even by imitating the worst ways. Your crimes are so obvious and yet you disclaim them. Of course, you will be judged for them, but how you have cheapened yourself. In the end Egypt will cause you as much shame as did Assyria. God has rejected your conferences, (with those peoples), and you will not succeed.

JEREMIAH III

Verses 1-5. Legally, a man could not remarry his wife, who, after being divorced, had married another, as such a practice would pollute the land; but in your case, so similar, God would make an exception. Indeed, there is hardly a place you have not polluted with your idolatrous practices and wickedness. And when lack of rainfall served as a reminder to you, you displayed a whore's brazenness in your refusal to feel ashamed. How well I would have heeded your call, since it is not everlasting revengefulness that I seek. It would seem you have spoken to this effect, but your evil deeds defeated your words.

Verses 6-11. The practice of idolatry and the refusal to recant, brought Israel's ten tribes to destruction and exile, and yet would traitorous Judah not learn its lesson, but persisted in doing the same. Indeed, in a sense, back-

sliding Israel would be more rightly absolved than treacherous Judah.

Verses 12-20. An appeal is made by God through the prophet, that Israel (the ten tribes) return by recognizing that it had sinned against God. Though few would be brought back to Zion, they would be taught to understand that it was not sufficient to rely upon the Ark of the Covenant to be saved. This would not even occur to them to make it again, (for their protection). Jerusalem will then be proclaimed as the seat of God for all nations which will spell the end of acting as one's evil heart pleases. For it was inconceivable that I should scatter you among the children (nations), as they would then become ineffective. I have, therefore, given you a lovely land and thought you would not depart from me, but you did deal treacherously with me.

Verses 21-25. A voice is heard upon the high places; it is the weeping and supplication of the children of Israel, for their having distorted their behavior (towards man), and forgotten their God. A call is issued to return, as God would meet them. The response comes forth: False indeed, were the echoes in the mountains. Verily, in our God is Israel's salvation. That shame (idolatry) has consumed the toil of our fathers, together with their sons and daughters. We were covered by shame and insult, because we and our fathers have sinned against God, not to listen to His Voice.

JEREMIAH IV

Verses 1-4. In the name of God, the prophet declares that it is not yet too late to return to Him, to reject the

abominations and avert exile; but the return must be with absolute truth and sincerity. The test will be that they gain the blessing and praise of all the peoples. They must, however, work to cultivate their characters, to remove "the foreskin of their hearts," as otherwise their efforts will produce thorns; their evil deeds will kindle the fire of destruction.

Verses 5-18. The prophet sees the oncoming tragedy from the north. The blowing of the trumpet calls for an assembly at which the people are told to hide in the fortified cities from before the devastating enemy. This calls for sackcloth and lamentation, says the prophet. They are all bewildered, from the king and his officers down to the priests (of Baal) and false prophets. At this point the prophet had protested to God for permitting the cry of peace until it reached the danger point. But while this destructive wind is due to come later. I have gotten a real whiff of it now, says the prophet, and therefore my warning. To avoid the cry, "We are spoiled (by the enemy), you must cleanse your heart and banish your destructive thoughts." The enemy is about to surround you, if you persist in your evil ways.

Verses 19-21. The prophet actually "hears" the trumpet of war, and "sees" the consequent misfortune, until he breaks down, crying that he cannot see and hear anymore. (Again the prophet protests to the people over their stupidity, to think that wisdom lies in doing evil, and not in doing good.) They are wise to do evil, but not to do good. Again he continues with his vision of destructiveness. He sees the earth barren and empty, the heavens without light, the mountains trembling, the absence of people, and even the emigration of birds, Carmel turned into a wilderness, and the cities burned.

The earth is in mourning, the skies are black, because God is realizing His idea unequivocally. The whole city is emptied, with the people fleeing to the thickets and huge rocks.

And you, unfortunate one, of what use were your charms that you displayed toward the peoples when their designs upon you called for your destruction. The daughter of Zion is sick, bewailing her lot that she has been so wearied by her murderers.

JEREMIAH V

Verses 1-9. The prophet complains bitterly that a search in the streets of Jerusalem will not produce one person who acts justly or seeks the truth, or all would have been forgiven. And it would seem that they swear in the name of God (precisely as people of today), but it is all false. But, God, are not Thine eyes (primarily) upon the truth—cries the prophet piteously. The prophet then thought that this sad fact is true only with the ignorant and stupid, but what of the great men? He made his way to them and found them conspiring together to "break the yoke and tear the bonds." It is therefore, that the beasts are lurking for them, for how could they be forgiven? Their life is one of brazen insensibility, much like the horses after they are well fed, as they are. Shall I not take account and revenge for such things?, saith the Lord.

Verses 10-25. In thinking of the next phase of their crimes, the prophet calls out that they ought to be severely punished, even if not completely annihilated. They have belied God, to say that it is not true as ascribed to Him, that He exacts retribution. The prophets are just

windpipes, not possessing the word (of God). But it is that word which will turn into a fire to consume them when a distant, mighty, and unintelligent nation will overtake them; when all your current and stored wealth together with your sons and daughters will be consumed by the enemy—though not completely. To substitute idol worship for serving the God who has put limits to the roaring waves of the sea, and orders the rains in their proper season, such a people must be stupid and with atrophied senses. It is only that their sins have turned (that understanding) away from them.

Verses 26-31. The wickedness of some is such that they snare people; and much as a cage is crowded with birds, so are their houses crowded with deceit upon which they grow rich and fat. They surpass in wickedness, there being no justice for the orphaned and the needy. Shall I not take account and revenge for such things, saith the Lord. What shocking and horrible things take place in the land! What with the false prophets who instigate the priests, and the people accepting it. What will come of it all?

JEREMIAH VI

Verses 1-15. The prophet turns to the children of Benjamin, that they organize for the coming war from the north. Zion, like a comely and delicate woman, is faced by a ruthless enemy, who plans to attack her by day and by night, and all because she has been (divinely) investigated and found full of oppression. She is actually a source of evil, as a well is a source of water. The cry of violence and spoils, followed by grief and wounds, is heard there. Jerusalem is urged to take heed lest it be

wiped out, even as the grapes are thoroughly gleaned from the vine. There is almost nobody to speak to or to warn; they consider God's word as shameful whereas I am all bottled up with God's fury, which threatens young and old, women and children. Strangers are about to take all houses, fields, women. This is not surprising, since from small to great, from prophet to priest, they are all after money, and carry on false dealings. And the unfortunate nation they appease by crying peace, peace, when there is no peace. They even experience no shame, while indulging in this abomination.

Verses 16-17. When they are told to study the historical accounts as to the best way to pursue, they refuse to do so. When sentries (prophets) are placed to issue the trumpet warning, they will not listen.

Verses 18-25. The prophet now summons the nations and the earth to listen to the consequences of their ideas, after rejecting God's Torah, but still indulging in unwanted sacrifices. There will be stumbling blocks in the path of families and their friends to cause their destruction. That will be the unmerciful enemy coming down fully equipped and roaring like a sea, causing the complete demoralization of the people, spreading fear all around.

Verse 26.The prophet calls for bitter mourning over this sudden misfortune. The prophet asserts that he was named as the staunchest investigator of the situation, and found them all to be revolting slanderers, corrupters, incapable ever of being refined or cultivated.

JEREMIAH VII

Verses 1-15. Jeremiah is bidden to take up his posi-

tion at the gate of the Temple and address the people. In the name of God, he tells them there is only one way by which they can maintain their security in the land, and that is by bettering their conduct and deeds. It is folly to rely upon the Temple for security. Unless justice is established among your fellowmen—the stranger, the orphan, and the widow are not oppressed, innocent blood is not spilled, and the detrimental idol worship is discarded, your security rests on false foundations. Do you really think that the Temple service will save you, despite your indulgence in stealing, murder, adultery, swearing falsely, and worshiping Baal? It looks as if you consider the Temple a den of robbers. Look back at the tragic end of Shiloh (the Tabernacle at Shiloh), which was brought about through your wickedness. Giving no heed to the constant warnings of the prophets will bring the same fate upon this Temple, as well as upon yourselves, even as happened to your brethren (of the Kingdom) of Ephraim.

Verse 16. Jeremiah is bidden not to plead for them in the face of such atrocities as their preoccupation with all kinds of idol worship. How silly to think that they are thus provoking God's anger, when they only bring shame upon themselves! Of course, nothing in the land will escape punishment, but the continuation of your sacrifices is really a useless task. This was not ever the condition upon which your forefathers were taken out from Egypt. The observance of all the precepts, generally, were then stressed. But this disobedience of yours has caused your retrogression, while you were warned unceasingly and yet to no avail; your faith seems to have been entirely lost.

Verses 29-34. The prophet is bidden to cut his hair

off and throw it away, and raise lamentations upon the high places, (as a sign of mourning), because God has despised His people. What with the unthinkable abomination of offering their children to the fire (Molech), that valley (of Molech) will be the place of their doom. All joy, the voice of bridegroom and bride, will be shut off from the cities of Judah and streets of Jerusalem. Desolation will overtake the land.

JEREMIAH VIII

Verses 1-14. At that time the enemy will even remove from their graves the corpses of the Judean kings and their officers; the corpses of the (Baal) priests and (false) prophets as well as of the plain citizens of Jerusalem. They will be strewn before the sun and the moon and all the heavenly host which they adored and worshiped, never to be interred again, even to become as dirt upon the earth. Concerning the rest of that evil family they would rather choose death than life even in those places to which they were cast away.

Verses 5-13. The prophet is bidden by God to tell them in his name whether they have really fallen not to rise or not to be able to come back, if come back they must, Why has this people become so irrevocably wild to hold on to deceit? Do they definitely refuse to recant? I listened but heard them not speak in such terms; none regrets his evil deeds, they all rush ahead like the galloping horse on the battlefield. The various birds in the skies know their seasons and watch their migration periods but my people does not understand the plan of God. How then could they say we are wise and in possession of God's

Torah when, indeed, they turned into a lie the pen as well as the scribes. Such wise men are shamed, broken, and trapped for since they defied God their wisdom is of no account. Therefore will I give away their wives and fields to others, as they are all grafters from small to great, they are all connivers from prophet to priest. As to the misfortune of my people their remedy for them is simple: it is to assure them of peace, peace, though there is no peace. Such abominations will yet leave them entirely without a sense of shame, only to secure their downfall at the appointed time. Their destruction will be from fruit to leaf as I put them under surveillance.

Verses 14-17. The suburban people will gather into the fortified cities though knowing that destruction awaits them there too, as it is a consequence of their sinfulness. Hope for peace will then turn into discomfort and (hope) for improved conditions into fright. From Dan will the noise of the (enemy's) horses be heard even throughout the land; they will consume the country and its wealth, the city and its people, and there will be no charm to stop their bite.

Verses 18-23. The prophet says that he tried to control his grief but the pain in his heart would not be stilled. He regrets that his people should have to cry out to God from distant lands; and when He was in Zion they sought to provoke Him with strange vanities. Now season after season is passing, with no salvation to come. This misfortune actually breaks the prophet and he cries out: Is there really no medicine or physician about—then why could not my people be healed? He wishes that his head were a (source) of water and his eyes a fountain of tears, so that he could cry day and night over the smitten of his people.

JEREMIAH IX

Verses 1-8. The prophet's wish is to leave his people for the wilderness, since they have become "an assembly of treacherous men." They have become attuned to falsity, discarding all truth, as a result of which they have stumbled from bad to worse, to the point where God would not be acknowledged. Friend would guard himself against friend, and one would distrust his brother, as deceit and slander became the vogue. The attitude toward one another is a cynical one, wherein the truth is not spoken and one's energy is bent on trickery. One is just immersed in cunning, amidst which there could be no thought of God. But since they are still His people, He is intent upon purifying them. They are so adept in their cunning, speaking peaceably and yet full of connivance. Can I forego taking revenge on such a people?

Verses 9-15. After this indictment the prophet sees the land entirely devastated, with none in it from men to birds. Instead it has turned into a den of snakes. But how could this abnormal devastation of people and land itself be explained? It is God's answer: Because they have forsaken the Torah, to do as they please. The dispersion will therefore become their punishment.

Verses 16-21. The prophet calls upon the professional mourning women to mourn this great misfortune of dispossession of the land and the indiscriminate slaughter of its people.

Verses 22-23. (The lesson therefore, is clear.) The wise, the powerful, the wealthy can ill afford to boast invulnerability. Only one educated in the knowledge of God, which (in the final analysis) spells the practice of

kindness, justice, and righteousness is worthy of praise.

Verses 24-25. In the end all the uncircumcized whether of flesh or of heart will receive their punishment.

JEREMIAH X

Verses 1-16. The prophet bids Israel not go by the signs of heaven (astrology) which tends to dismay the heathens. Neither should they resort to idol worship, which is the ridiculous custom of the people, since that cannot harm or do good. There is none like God in greatness and strength whom even the wise among the heathen people tend to recognize and fear. But in one thing they display ignorance and stupidity—in fashioning idols. These, however, they know will perish, for it is the indignation of the true and living God that the nations will feel—the One who created, with wisdom and understanding, the earth, its people, and the entire cosmos: who sets in motion the rain, the clouds, the lightning, and the wind. To practice idolatry the people must be devoid of any sense, but not such is the lot of Jacob, for Israel is still His inheritance.

Verses 17-22. The prophet describes his wound as unbearable when he visualizes Israel's eventual punishment, for which its senseless leaders are held responsible.

Verses 23-25. It is the prophet's prayer that since it is impossible for man to control all his ways therefore shall the punishment be with judgment and not with anger, "lest we shall dwindle away." As for your anger let it be visited upon those nations who would not deliberately recognize you and yet would by all means seek to destroy Israel.

JEREMIAH XI

Verses 1-17. The prophet is reminded by God that the covenant between Him and Israel upon the latter's exodus from Egypt specified positive punishment if transgressed; this the prophet affirmed. It was then that the prophet was commanded to go out into the "cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem" and warn the people accordingly. They were to be warned that this conspiracy on their part to supplant the worship of God with as many different idols as there are cities in Judah will exact its retribution. When misfortune strikes their prayers shall not be answered; neither will the prophet's intervening in their behalf avail anything. It is deplorable how such a goodly fruit has become so spoiled as to remove all signs of holiness from itself and yet to rejoice in its evil deeds. (It is sad) that God who planted Israel should think of destroying them.

Verses 18-23. But after this indictment the prophet claims that he is powerless. Moreover they (his own townspeople) are yet planning his death to avenge his unfortunate prophecies. As to this God assures him that such planning will cost them their lives.

JEREMIAH XII

Verses 1-4. After offering his apologies to God "who is righteous" the prophet proceeds with his query as to why the wicked are successful and accomplish their designs. That God knows their hidden treachery even as he knows the prophets (genuine uprightness) is positive;

then why does He permit them to destroy the land first rather than that they should be destroyed?

Verses 5-6. (God's answer intensifies the painfulness of the prophet's question.) It is with the pedestrians (or common people) that you cannot keep up (says God), a rather peaceful population, but what would you do with the (galloping) horses (the dignitaries), (whose downward run) is as swift as the stream of the Jordan? Here the prophet is informed that even his immediate family is organized against him, though their attitude toward him is still friendly.

Verses 7-13. (Therefore, declares God,) He has forsaken His dearest people, who have turned against each other like animals in a forest, and who have therefore easily fallen a prey to the foreign enemy.

Verses 14-17. The surrounding peoples, however, who have persecuted Israel will not escape with impunity. If they are reinstated it will only be after they will have learned to have faith in God as it is taught by Israel.

JEREMIAH XIII

Verses 1-11. The prophet was ordered by God to buy a girdle and to wear it without washing it. He was then told to take it and hide it in the ground. After the girdle had entirely depreciated, God told Jeremiah to take it out again. This served to demonstrate to the people that they had depreciated, much as did the girdle, although formerly God had embraced them, as does the girdle.

Verses 12-14. Another demonstration was to pose before the people the question on the use of the wine flask. The prophet then spoke of the confusion that will overtake the kings, (false) priests, and prophets, much

as the wine confuses the drunkard. This will spell their destruction which will call for no mercy.

Verses 15-21. The prophet issues a warning that they must now renounce their false pride before it becomes too late, as his soul, at its very depths, cries out over the misfortune that will follow their indifference. He directs himself especially to the king, that he reflect upon the oncoming enemy from the north who is sweeping down even to the Negev to make the exile complete. The king is blamed for the efficiency of the enemy's command.

Verses 22-27. For this unhappy lot the prophet blames their multitude of sins, which have become imbedded in them, being by now incapable of change as is the skin of the dark man or the leopard's spots. The prophet concludes by asking when will the people become aware that the eleventh hour has already struck.

JEREMIAH XIV

Verses 1-12. The prophet describes the agony of Jerusalem over the lack of rainfall which caused the destruction of crops and animal life. He appeals to God for mercy, since "you are still among us and we are still called by your name." The reply is stern in which Jeremiah is commanded to cease to pray for their good. The people —he is told—have forfeited their rights to life despite their probable fasting.

Verses 13-18. Jeremiah now pleads that for this whole mess the false prophets are to be blamed, which draws God's retort that for this deception their end will be most miserable. And before this prophecy is concluded, alluding to the simultaneous destruction of the people, the

prophet breaks into tears, the flow of which he feels will not cease day and night.

Verses 19-22. Here the prophet appeals to God that while we are aware of our wickedness yet must He not abhor us completely, to destroy His covenant with us, as His throne of glory is thereby sure to become disgraced. As against the vanities of the peoples we still put our hope in God, the creator of rain and all that is.

JEREMIAH XV

Verses 1-14. The fate of the people is sealed; their destruction through death, the sword, famine, and captivity could not be revoked even by the prayers of Moses and Samuel. There will be none interested in mercy for Jerusalem since their disinterestedness in Me compares to the times of Menasseh, son of Hezekiah; verily I am weary of reconsidering. Since they will not return I will scatter them until they are lost. God regrets, however, the many widows, the principal city, the enemy and his battles. But (Judah) cannot escape the fate of the seven dynasties (of Ephraim). This prophecy which concludes with the eventual dispersion of the people and its wealth, as retribution for its sins, is suddenly interrupted by the outcries of the prophet that he was born for such a thankless role of being the man of strife and contention to the whole earth. God consoles him that his role will yet serve a good purpose in times of distress.

Verses 15-21. Jeremiah, however, regretting that his original joy in God's word proved so disappointing pleaded to be released from this dire situation. His plea was conceded, but he was promised greater reward if through his efforts a more precious person could result. He was

urged not to quit since He (God) could always stand by him so that no harm be done him.

JEREMIAH XVI

Verses 1-13. The prophet is bidden by God not to take a wife, so that he may not have sons and daughters. This was to serve as another demonstration of the ultimate destruction that would overtake the people. He was also told not to visit the house of mourning or take part in the mourning ceremonies, as a sign that these things will cease in the eventual confusion. Neither was he to participate in joyous celebrations, as these too will cease. And, if the people should inquire for the reason of all this, his answer must be that they have yet exceeded their fathers in the vile practices of idolatry, forsaking God and His Torah. The acme of their disappointment will be reached when they find that these practices have failed to ingratiate them with the people of their dispersion.

Verses 14-21. This prophecy, which ends with the assurance that there will be no hideout to escape the searching eye of the enemy, is interpolated with two verses which assure the ultimate redemption, dimming even the one of Egypt. When the prophet, however, attempts to placate God's anger by playing down the idolatry issue as one that is bound to crack out of its own uselessness, God insists that they will have to learn it ahead of time.

JEREMIAH XVII

Verses 1-4. It is their extreme devotion to idolatry—a devotion that is experienced only toward one's children

—that kindles God's anger to punish them ahead of time (see preceding chapter).

Verses 5-17. The prophet compares those who put their sole trust in the powers of man as against those who put their trust in God—the former is like a heath in the desert, while the latter is like the tree situated by the river stream—the one unproductive, the other constantly productive. Man's heart is painfully complicated and it is only God who can fathom it and reward him accordingly. A person may seem to amass great wealth, but it may be as productive as the labor cries of the partridge that begets no offspring. Such a person becomes disillusioned at middle age and his end is quite miserable. Only in God is Israel's hope. The prophet therefore pleads to be healed and helped by God, if it is to be real and permanent. Now, while there are some people who are impatient with God's actions, the prophet is not. And while he disclaims anxiety for the woeful day (for the impatient), he would like to see the destruction of his enemies before they destroy him.

Verses 18-21. The prophet appeals for strict observance of the Sabbath, as its desecration will bring ruin upon Zion.

JEREMIAH XVIII

Verses 1-17. The prophet was bidden by God to visit the potter's house. It was then that the vessel in the making was damaged, whereupon the potter proceeded to form another vessel out of that clay. Now Israel is as clay in His hand, said God, even as is the clay in the hands of the potter, whether for good or for bad, depending upon the immediate nature of their actions. Israel

now seems to be through with God's word, discarding any appeal to change their ways. This is horrible, for no nation would discard the highway, claiming it to be inconvenient, for the unpaved road. The consequences are inevitable—that every passerby will nod his head on the day of their misfortune.

Verses 18-23. The prophet is beside himself that some people should be so dead set against him when he is at all times pleading to God in their behalf. Those people claim that there are enough priests, wise men, and prophets, from whom they could learn Torah, counsel, and the word of God. Jeremiah appeals for their violent destruction.

JEREMIAH XIX

Verses 1-13. Jeremiah is again bidden by God to buy a potter's earthen bottle; this he should do in the presence of the elders of the people and the elders of the priests. He should then proceed to the valley of the son of Hinnom where children were sacrificed to the Molech god. There he should issue his warning that this practice which has alienated this place (Eretz Israel) from God, because neither they nor their fathers were informed of it, will cause their astonishing destruction. Employing the Hebrew word "to void," which sounds like the word bottle (in the example), the prophet warns that the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem will be voided because "they filled up" this place with innocent blood. He also broke the bottle before the people that came along with him, to signify that so will the city and the people be broken. In that whole valley of Topheth the guilty will be buried.

Verses 14-15. That prophecy Jeremiah repeated in the Court of God's House.

JEREMIAH XX

Verses 1-6. Now when Pashhur, supervisor of the temple, heard the above prophecy, he smote Jeremiah and put him in prison. On the next day when he freed him, Jeremiah assured him that instead of Pashhur, his name will be "a terror from all around'" (a probable play on words). He will be witness to the scene when his loved one will fall by the sword of the enemy and Judah will go to exile. Moreover, all the strength, the labor, the precious things of the city, as well as the treasures of the king, will be carried off to Babylonia, and he himself will die there.

Verses 7-18. The prophet complains that as a result of God's persuasion, he has become the laughing stock of one and all. He could not, however, withhold God's word either, since it is "in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones." They are all waiting for him to slip in some way so that they may wreak their revenge upon him, in which, with God's help, they do not succeed. Instead he hopes to see God's vengeance on them. Now though he is full of praise to God for saving him, nevertheless he curses the day he was born and the messenger who brought these tidings to his father, for he still sees sorrow and spends his day in contumely.

JEREMIAH XXI

Verses 1-10. Jeremiah was confronted by two of King Zedekiah's ministers, to urge him, in the name of the

king, that he pray to God, so that the Babylonian king stop the war he is now waging against him. Instead he sends word to the king that the fighting will spread to the city, and that God Himself is furiously engaged in the fight against them. Also that they will die by pestilence and famine inside the city, as well as by the unmerciful sword of the enemy when he gets there. The only escape would be to surrender to the enemy, which he urged every individual to do.

Verses 11-14. The King of Judah is here warned again that the defrauded must be saved from his oppressor and justice must be executed. He warns the inhabitants of the valley as well as of the plain that they have lulled themselves into a false sense of security. They will have to face the fruit of their deeds.

JEREMIAH XXII

Verses 1-12. The prophecy, which was uttered in a flash in the foregoing chapter, directed toward the King of Judah, is here being elaborated. He is bidden to do justice and righteousness, to save the defrauded from his oppressor, not to deceive the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, and to cease the shedding of innocent blood. His continuation as king or the alternative is dependent upon the realization or the negation of these conditions. And when the land will be devastated people will know the reason for it—it will be that they have forsaken their covenant with God to bow down to strange gods instead. Let them therefore restrain their tears over those who die a natural death, but rather should they cry for him that goes away never to return to his homeland, as will be the fate of the king.

Verses 13-19. The king had built for himself a beautiful and spacious house without paying the workers for their labor. Jehoiakim the king is therefore chastised by the prophet. He asks him whether he is so sure that he will reign for long. He points to him that his father was a happy man, because he practiced justice and righteousness though he enjoyed food and drink. To know God is to judge the poor rightly and not to have your eyes and heart upon amassing riches unscrupulously, to shed innocent blood and to rob wherever possible. He foretells a bitter end; like a dead ass so will his corpse lie about, without being buried.

Verses 20-30. Coniah, Jehoiakim's son, is also fated to die in a strange land together with his mother. What a humiliating and distorted scene that is! And none of his children will yet rule in Judah. All because they have taken lightly My warnings which I have uttered in time; but not to heed is already a habit with them.

JEREMIAH XXIII

Verses 1-8. The prophet lays the present threat of exile to bad leadership, for which the leaders will have to account accordingly. A remnant of the people, however, will be returned to Zion under the leadership of one from the House of David, who would be called: God's generosity to us! since it will be in his day that Judah and Israel will live securely. Moreover the Egyptian exodus will be dimmed in the light of the new exodus from all the lands of the diaspora.

Verses 9-15. Jeremiah professes heartache and a trembling of his whole body when he beholds the false proph-

ets and the mischief they wrought in the land through their appeasing tactics. They will slip through in the end, since they are pursuing a line similar to the one of the Shomronite prophets—adultery, falseness, and supporting the wicked, as the latter have done in the name of Baal.

Verses 16-29. The prophet appeals to the people not to permit themselves to be fooled, for they are not speaking in the name of God. They are merely imitating the true prophet when they claim that in their dreams they have seen a prophecy. Do they think that they can hide from God, and besides, is it not obvious that theirs is just straw against grain, for like a fire is the word of God and like a hammer that crumbles the rock?

Verses 30-40. A warning is therefore issued to the false prophets that unless they stop stealing and copying the style of the true prophet with which they deceive the people, a perpetual shame will be inflicted upon them.

JEREMIAH XXIV

Verses 1-7. It was after the Babylonian king had driven Jeconiah, King of Judah, into exile, together with his officers and certain other classes of the people, that God showed Jeremiah two baskets of figs, one of good quality and the other so poor as to be inedible. This—God explained—is to signify that those now in exile will return to their land and to God. It will be first then that they understand God, since their return will be wholehearted. Zedekiah and the rest of the people, on the other hand, will now have to face all the horrors of exile (as signified by the poor figs).

JEREMIAH XXV

Verses 1-27. This prophecy was delivered during the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign and the first of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylonia. It is already the 23rd year—Jeremiah tells the people—since his reprimanding them for their evil ways and warning them against the grave consequences if they should fail to discard their idol worship. Such was the perennial theme not only of himself but of the many other prophets, but to no avail. Now, however, has come the time when Nebuchadnezzar and all his allies from the north will destroy the land so completely that there will be no manner of rejoicing in it. This subserviency to Babylonia, however, will last only seventy years, after which the latter herself will be destroyed as a logical consequence of its (excessively) destructive activities. Here the prophet enumerates a list of about twenty-five different peoples that will fall by the sword of Babylonia, which in turn will meet with the same fate (through another power—Persia).

Verse 28. All these peoples must not think that they will escape punishment if Jerusalem will not. God has declared war against the wicked. They shall fall (and break), like a pleasure vessel.

JEREMIAH XXVI

Verses 1-7. It was in the first year of Jehoiakim's reign that Jeremiah received instructions from God to appear in the court of the Temple in order to warn the people of the coming disaster as a result of their failure to observe the Torah; this was to be another attempt

to move them to repentance much as former prophets have constantly tried.

Verses 8-19. At the end of the prophecy Jeremiah was seized by the false priests and prophets, the people present shouting together that he must die. Thereupon the king's officers heard the commotion and made their way toward the crowd. The nature of his prophecy was explained to them and a death sentence demanded. Jeremiah submitted calmly, but warned them that they would shed innocent blood, since he had truly been sent by God. It was then that the officers, with whom the people seemed to concur, absolved him, recalling, at the same time, that Micah, the Morashtite, prophesied similarly in the times of Hezekiah, and his prophecy was then heeded by the God-fearing king.

Verses 20-24. This seemed to recall a similar example, wherein a prophet named Uriah was pursued even to Egypt, whereto he fled from the wrath of King Jehoiakim for prophesying in the same vein as Jeremiah, to be taken from there only to be killed by the angry king. However, Ahikam, son of Shaphan, saved Jeremiah (despite the convincing precedent).

JEREMIAH XXVII

Verses 1-22. Jeremiah was commanded by God to appear with bonds and yokes upon his neck before the envoys of the following kingdoms who were sent to King Zedekiah—Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon. (They might have come to conspire together against the rule of Babylonia.) These bonds and yokes were to advise them that they would do well to submit to the Babylonian rule, since God had appointed him to rule over countries,

and even that the beasts should be obedient to him. He also warned them that they would meet with catastrophe should they listen to their false prophets and soothsayers. The same warning was issued to Zedekiah. And while the false prophets predicted that the vessels of the Temple which had been carried off to Babylonia at the time of the exile of Jeconiah would be returned, Jeremiah warned that unless they surrendered, the remaining vessels would be looted by the enemy until the appointed time when first they would be returned to Jerusalem.

JEREMIAH XXVIII

Verses 1-17. Contrary to Jeremiah's prophecy (in the preceding chapter) that the Temple's vessels would not be returned to Jerusalem, Hananiah the son of Azzur "prophesied" that they would. This would come about in two years after the power of the Babylonian king would be broken. Also, Jeconiah and those with him now in exile would come back. Jeremiah expressed his wish that it were so and assured him that he now stood a chance of being confirmed as a true prophet, since God never abrogates a peaceable prophecy. Thereupon Hananiah took the (symbolic) yoke off Jeremiah's neck and broke it, repeating his prophecy on the downfall of Babylonia.

Verses 18-27. But after Jeremiah left, God summoned him to refute Hananiah's prophecy. Instead of the wooden yoke which he broke, iron yokes will be forged, as such is the will of God that Nebuchadnezzar should rule over peoples. And because he prophesied falsely to give the people false illusions, he would die the same year, which was so.

JEREMIAH XXIX

Verses 1-14. This is the contents of a letter which Jeremiah sent through Elasah and Gemariah with King Zedekiah's permission, to Jeconiah, exile in Babylonia.

It is the will of God that you build houses there and plant vineyards, that you and the children that will come, get married, so that you may increase instead of decrease. Also that they pray for the peace of the city, for it is only then that they will have peace themselves. He also warned them that they must not let themselves be deceived by the false prophets in their midst to the contrary, since it would yet take seventy years before they return. God's intentions about them are always good if only they express a yearning for Him; He will respond by delivering them from exile.

Verses 15-32. In so far as the false prophets among you are concerned, may you know that the remainder of Judah is still to undergo all the misfortunes of war, after which the rest will be driven into exile. Two such false prophets who advocated promiscuous living are singled out by name and their end foretold, that they would be sentenced to be burned by the Babylonian king. Also Shemaiah and his children will not live to see the good because of the letter he wrote to Zephaniah urging him to seize the priesthood and put the prophets into prison and in chains, especially Jeremiah for his advice to the exiles to live a normal and fruitful life in Babylonia.

JEREMIAH XXX

Verses 1-11. Since this prophecy concerns the distant

future the prophet was bidden by God to write it down in a book. The gist is that Israel and Judah will yet be returned unto the land of their fathers to repossess it. And these are the details of the prophecy. Horrible times are coming on upon Jacob and their frightening sounds are already scaring the staunchest of males. But Jacob will be saved from his foreign yoke so that he may serve his God again and the eventual king of David's descent. Only Jacob need not fear or despair, for while the nations among whom he was (originally) dispersed will disappear, such, however, will not be his lot. His suffering will not exceed his accumulated sins.

Verses 12-25. Even his friends have given up hope of seeing Jacob emerge from his blows or to see him yearn for Zion again, but he will be healed of his blows even to see his enemies destroyed. And Jerusalem will yet upon its mountain be rebuilt, whence thankfulness and merriment will come forth. His society will be firmly established under his own rule, much to the distress of his oppressors, and only with God's help will he gradually make his approach to Him again. That this was God's original intent, to destroy the wicked and resurrect Israel as His people, will first clearly be seen at the end of days.

JEREMIAH XXXI

Verses 1-16. The charm of Israel impressed God with an everlasting love for them even as they were still wandering through the desert on their way to find tranquility. Israel therefore will yet be rebuilt to live merrily; to replant their vineyards on the mountains of Shomron. The joyous call will be issued from Zion's mountain tops as well as from the heights of the other nations, for

Israel to return, as the day of salvation comes. The way will be unobstructed, as they will all march back, moved by tears and prayers, from the ends of the world—all the maimed, as well as the women with child. That scattered and overpowered Israel are returning to their land will become the conversation of all peoples. Their mourning and sorrow will turn into joy as they come to live amidst great prosperity. Mother Rachel, who refused to be comforted over the plight of her children, will now find comfort upon their return to their own borders.

Verses 17-26. Ephraim will now regret his shameful youth, which came as a result of an inexperienced life. Of course, Ephraim is a dear son, a pleasant child, for even as I speak of him I recall (his loveliness), therefore am I moved to have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.

The prophet urges Israel to take the initiative in returning to Zion, as all will know that it is with God's blessings. Again will they till the soil and raise the flocks and enjoy their deserved rest. It is as if from a sweet trance, says the prophet, that he has now arisen.

Verses 27-39. God will assiduously help Zion rebuild itself, not permitting its sins ever to accumulate again. He will now make a new covenant with Israel whereby His Torah will be inscribed upon their hearts, and all will know Him, from the least of them to the greatest. As it is possible for the cosmic laws that keep in position the sun, moon, and the waves of the ocean to depart, so is it possible for Israel to depart as a nation. As it is impossible to fathom the cosmos or the very depth of the earth, so will it prove impossible for God ever to despise Israel again.

Finally, Jerusalem will expand far beyond its original walls.

JEREMIAH XXXII

Verses 1-15. It was in the tenth year of Zedekiah's reign that the Babylonian armies besieged Jerusalem. Jeremiah was then in prison because of his prophecy that the city would fall and Zedekiah would die in exile. It was then that God's word came to Jeremiah to inform him that soon his nephew would come to suggest that he buy his field since, as next of kin, he had priority over others. When his nephew Hanamel came Jeremiah immediately bought the field, the deed was signed and the title ratified. Jeremiah then gave the deed and the search, publicly signed by witnesses, to Baruch, so that he might put it into an earthen vessel to be preserved for a long time. It was to symbolize that real estate transactions would yet be made in the land.

Verses 16-25. This prophecy seemed to put doubt into the prophet's mind as to God's immediate intentions. In a prayerful mood the prophet turned to God, reiterating that it certainly was within His power to do whatever He pleased (meaning, perhaps, to stop the war right now.) It is clear, however, that just as God rewards goodness so does He punish for doing evil. Now it is true that God had taken Israel out of Egypt and brought them into a land of milk and honey, but they sinned against God and disobeyed his Torah. And now that the siege was on, asked the prophet, what might be the meaning of your instructions to me that I buy the field?

Verses 26-44. True, answered God. I can do as I please, but the war will go on because of Israel's sins in stooping to idolatry and to the Molech cult, to burn their children. However, after they receive their punish-

ment they will be restored to their land. They will then be of one heart to fear me and I will be as happy to do them good and make them prosperous. This is the meaning of your present transaction.

JEREMIAH XXXIII

Verses 1-13. God calls again upon Jeremiah while he is still in prison, to explain what may seem non-understandable. Despite the present destruction in the city, God will apply the proper medication and will heal them even unto an abundance of steadfast peace. The captivity of Judah and Israel will return and their sins be entirely forgiven. The magnificence of Israel in point of goodness and peace will startle the nations of the world. Instead of the noises of sure ruination the voices of joy and happiness will be heard—voices also of thankfulness to the God of everlasting kindness. All the sections of the land will be teeming with life.

Verses 14-18. One of the House of David will rule them and the priests will never again be interrupted in their sacrificial activities. The city will be known as God's generosity to us!

Verses, 19-26. God assures Jeremiah that the complaint of the people in regard to the apparent abolition of the kingship and the priesthood is groundless. Even as I will undo the laws that govern day and night so will I undo the descent of King David and of Aaron from being kings and priests unto me.

JEREMIAH XXXIV

Verses 1-7. It was during the siege of Jerusalem and

the fortified cities around it that God disclosed to Jeremiah Zedekiah's eventual fate. He would be captured alive and brought to Babylonia, where he would finally die in peace, receiving a royal funeral.

Verses 8-22. This prophecy concerns the freeing of the slaves. According to the Torah a Jewish slave was to serve a period not exceeding six years. The people, however disobeyed this law, refusing to free their slaves in time. At last Zedekiah succeeded in persuading them to free those who had served the six year period. But immediately thereafter the people underwent a change of heart and seized their slaves back again. Moreover, they made a pact among themselves not to yield in this matter. The pact was consummated ceremoniously by cutting a calf in half and passing through its two pieces. Because they failed to abide by the freedom granted to the slaves, Jeremiah proclaimed the freedom of the enemy to destroy them together with their cherished cities.

JEREMIAH XXXV

Verses 1-19. A man by the name of Jonadab the son of Rechab had at one time (and for certain reasons), enjoined upon his family and its posterity to live in the fields outside the city and never to drink wine. As a result of the siege upon Jerusalem they were forced to move into the city. It was now God's command to Jeremiah to invite these people into one prominent office in the Temple and to serve them wine. Jeremiah served them wine, which they refused to drink, explaining that in no event would they break their family vow not to drink it. This furnished the prophet with the occasion to point out to the people the contrasts of their deplorable

behavior. While the Jonadab family obeyed the first original command of their ancestor the others failed to obey the ever repeated warnings of the various prophets; they did not swerve from their evil ways of idol worship. The people would therefore not escape from the holocaust moving up on them, while the Jonadab family would be spared.

JEREMIAH XXXVI

Verses 1-22. It was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign that God commanded Jeremiah to write down in book form all these prophecies, which he had spoken hitherto concerning Judah and all other peoples. It was to be another attempt to move them to repentance. Jeremiah therefore called upon Baruch his secretary to write down the prophecies as he dictated them. Still being in prison, he instructed Baruch to read them at the Temple before all the people as they gathered on the scheduled fast day. Among the listeners was Micaiah, who immediately informed the officers of the king's cabinet about it. Baruch was thereupon summoned to read the book before the officers. The latter were seized with fear, and as they were assured by Baruch that he had written it down word for word from Jeremiah's mouth they decided to inform the king in turn. The king ordered the book read before him. As he heard the first three or four verses he, calmly and against the protests of his officers, cut pieces from the book and threw them into the fire on the hearth before him, and Jeremiah and Baruch he ordered imprisoned. They were promptly put away, and in accordance with God's instructions Jeremiah redic-

tated the original contents of the book with additions. As to Jehoiakim, his dead body was to lie without being interred, and his son would not continue his reign.

JEREMIAH XXXVII

Verses 1-21. Zedekiah, upon ascending the throne, freed Jeremiah from prison. However, the king as well as his officers and the people still failed to heed the prophet's advice. It was the king though, who was anxious for Jeremiah to pray to God against this catastrophic situation. For this purpose he dispatched two officers to urge him to do so. Of a sudden the Chaldeans retreated, because they heard that the Egyptian armies were advancing toward them. Jeremiah, however, warned the people that the Chaldeans would soon return to finish their bloody job. In the meantime the prophet left Jerusalem for the Benjamin district, where he was held up at the gates by an officer who accused him of surrendering to the enemy; and despite the prophet's denials, he handed him over to the authorities, who put him into prison again, after giving him a beating. After some time the king send for him to inquire what might be the latest word from God. It was brief—namely, that he would be defeated. Meanwhile the prophet pleaded with the king that he not be sent back to the horrible prison. He called his attention to his innocence, since it was obvious now that it was the false prophets who had lulled the people into disaster. The king acquiesced: Jeremiah was put into the court prison, where he was fed with bread until there was no more left in the city.

JEREMIAH XXXVIII

Verses 1-28. When the ministers of the king's cabinet learned of Jeremiah's persistence in urging the people to surrender one by one as a means of saving their lives, they decided that he must be killed. It was their contention that he was demoralizing what remained of the army and the people, and that he was out to do harm rather than good. The king, being in a disheartened mood, yielded. They then threw him into a lime pit (there to die). However, the injustice done the innocent Jeremiah was soon pointed out to the king by another one of his officers. Thereupon the king ordered Jeremiah to be saved. The officer took along thirty men, and upon the king's advice, together they pulled Jeremiah out of the pit. The king then sent for Jeremiah, as he was anxious to hear what his advice might now be. The prophet, however, insisted that it would be useless to speak since the king would not heed his advice anyway, and Jeremiah might yet be killed. But after the king swore the prophet would not be killed, the prophet advised him to surrender completely if he cares to save himself, his family, and the city. The prophet also allayed his fears that he would be mistreated by the Jews who had already surrendered to the Chaldeans and to whom they might hand him over. He also warned him that afterward no excuse would help, since the captured royal women would testify against him, that he had been willing to go along with the false prophets and his officers. The king then told Jeremiah not to disclose to the inquiring ministers the nature of their conversation, so as to avoid

harm; he should rather tell them that he had merely pleaded not to be returned to the old prison.

Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison until Jerusalem was captured.

JEREMIAH XXXIX

Verses 1-18. It was in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign and in the tenth month of the year that Nebuchadnezzar and his armies besieged Jerusalem; and in the eleventh year of his reign, the fourth month of the year, on the ninth of the month, the city walls were cracked open. After Zedekiah and his army saw the high officers of the enemy gathered at the central wall they fled during the night (by secret passage) toward the plains of Jericho. There they were caught by the Chaldean soldiers, and Zedekiah was brought before the Babylonian king, who would pass sentence on him. Zedekiah's children, as well as the nobility of Judah, were slain before his eyes, and then his own eyes were put out; and bound in chains, he was brought to Babylonia. The king's house, as well as all other principal houses, was burned and the walls smashed. The rest of the people and all those who surrendered were driven off to Babylonia by Nebuzaradan, the chief prosecutor. Only the very poor he left, to whom he gave vineyards and fields. He was also ordered by the king to take good care of Jeremiah and to let him do as he pleased. Jeremiah was then freed from the court of the prison by the high officers of the king, and was permitted to join Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan. However, while he was yet in the prison court Jeremiah received word from God to reassure Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, the officer who had saved his life

from the lime pit, that though he could be amidst the destruction of the city his own life would be spared because he had demonstrated faith in God.

JEREMIAH XL

Verses 1-16. Originally Jeremiah lined up with the people who were scheduled to be exiled and even had the chains put upon himself. Nebuzaradan, however, tried to convince the prophet that he need not mistreat himself in this manner, since his people's present fate was merely the realization of God's warning of retribution for their sins. He released him from his chains then and told him that if he wished to go to Babylonia, it would be under his personal care, or he might stay in the land and go wherever he pleased. While the prophet hesitated the chief prosecutor suggested that he go to Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, whom the king had appointed governor over the cities of Judah, and wherever else he cared to go; he then put up a pension for him, gave him other presents, and sent him off. Jeremiah then came to Gedaliah and settled with him among the people. In the meantime the scattered army officers and their men heard that Gedaliah had been appointed governor over the poorer people who had not been exiled into Babylonia. A number of them together with their men came to Gedaliah. The latter swore that they need not fear the Chaldeans; on the contrary, they would have it good if they settled down and were willing to serve the Babylonian king. He told them that he would stay at Mizpah while they gathered the wine and the summer fruit and settled in whatever city they wished. The other Jews who had fled to Moab, Ammon, Edom, and other lands like-

wise heard of Gedaliah having become the governor over the remnant left in Judah, and so they all came back. They too gathered plenty of wine and summer fruit. It was then, however, that Gedaliah was informed by Jonathan the son of Koreah, that Ishmael the son of Nathaniah had accepted the mission of Baalis, King of the Ammonites, to kill him. Gedaliah refused to believe this, and also refused to give permission to Jonathan to kill Ishmael before all was lost.

JEREMIAH XLI

Verses 1-18. It was in the seventh month that Ishmael, a member of the royal family and a high officer, came to Gedaliah along with ten of his men and killed him after dining with him. This seems to have been an act of jealousy over Gedaliah being appointed governor. Ishmael also killed all the Chaldeans and the Jewish soldiers that were with Gedaliah. It was on the second day, and nobody had yet learned of this horrible thing, when Ishmael met a group of eighty men, their beards shorn, their clothes rent, and their flesh cut; they were on their way from Shechem to the Temple with offerings and incense. He killed them all but ten, who claimed that they had in the fields hidden treasures of wheat, barley, oil, and honey. The group could not suspect Ishmael because he was weeping and had invited them to come to Gedaliah. After he threw the corpses into the well which King Asa had built in defense against King Baashah of Israel, Ishmael rounded up the remainder of the people at Mizpah along with the king's daughters and led them captive to the Ammonites. It was then that Jonathan the son of Koreah learned of all these terrible happenings. Immedi-

ately he went out with his men to fight Ishmael, whom he found by the great waters at Gibeon. And when the captive people saw Jonathan they all turned happily around and joined him. Ishmael escaped with only eight men to the Ammonites. Jonathan then took the people and they settled at Chimham, because they feared the accusations of the Chaldeans.

JEREMIAH XLII

Verses 1-22. Jeremiah was now approached by the generals, among whom are Johanan, son of Koreah, and Jezaniah, son of Hoshaiah, as well as the people, with the request that, since they were now reduced to a mere few out of the many they had been, let the prophet plead to God for the proper course they should now take. After the prophet consented they reassured him that whether they liked it or not they would abide by God's word. At the end of ten days the prophet sent for all of them and let them know it was God's will that they remain in their places. He told them to get busy rebuilding and replanting the land, and as for the Babylonian king they need not fear him, since God was intent upon helping them—so that the king too would cooperate in displaying mercy and permitting them to repossess the land. However, if they should defy God's will and go to Egypt with the excuse that there they would escape war and starvation, then these horrors would first attack them there, to kill them entirely. The prophet (knowing their sentiments) reiterated again and again that if they went to Egypt they would meet with the same fate as the people of Jerusalem; they would shamefully be annihilated. It was

a blunder on their part to ask of God the course to pursue (since, as it seemed, they would not abide by it).

JEREMIAH XLIII

Verses 1-7. After Jeremiah concluded his talk he was confronted by Azariah and Johanan and the arrogant among them with the accusation that his message from God not to go to Egypt was a lie; it had really come from Baruch, intent upon handing them over to the Chaldeans to be killed or exiled. Consequently, they gathered all the people, even forcing Jeremiah and Baruch to join them, and left for Egypt.

Verse 8-13. When they reached Tahpanhes in Egypt God instructed Jeremiah to take big stones and hide them in the brick kiln, as a sign, for all the people to see and note, that God would place Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, above these stones so that his royal pavilion be spread over them. He would then attack Egypt and reduce her to death, exile, and starvation, burn their houses, and leave peacefully after destroying the images of their chief god together with their temples.

JEREMIAH XLIV

Verses 1-30. A moving appeal and a stern warning were issued by the prophet to all the Jews settled in the various parts of Egypt. Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah were now lying waste and without people, even as they had seen themselves. This had come about because they failed to listen to the incessant entreaties of the prophets that they cease their idol worship. And why, asks the prophet, do they now insist on bringing upon

themselves the same misfortune of being entirely uprooted because they would not relinquish their practice of idolatry? Have they forgotten when everybody indulged in this evil practice beginning with the kings and their wives, down to all the people in the land of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem? Are you still not crushed enough to fear God to walk in the ways of His Torah and His laws which were given to you and to your fathers? Therefore will you all be annihilated before your boast of coming back to your land will be realized, for only some refugees here and there will return.

Their answer to the prophet was defiant; they would persist in worshiping and serving the heavenly bodies as this brought them good fortune and plenty of bread. After they stopped their idol worship were they reduced to poverty, starvation, and the sword—they told the prophet.

But the fact is that you did indulge in idol worship and you did refuse to obey the Torah and its precepts—pleaded Jeremiah—and for this very reason this misfortune has come upon you. Now this insistence of yours will hasten your complete destruction, and when only a few refugees return to Judah we will then see—says God—who will be the winner, you or I. And here is the sure sign that this will happen, for it will be Pharaoh Hophra who will be defeated at the hands of the Babylonian king, even as was Zedekiah, King of Judah.

JEREMIAH XLV

Verses 1-5. This came as a prophetic retort to Baruch at the time when Jeremiah dictated his book of prophecies in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign. Baruch com-

plained bitterly that it was only added pain and anguish that he was experiencing, without the serenity that is found (in prophecy). The prophet told Baruch, in the name of God, that at this time, when all that was ever built or accomplished was being destroyed and uprooted, was not the proper occasion to seek great things. That he would escape with his life from this holocaust was enough of a compensation.

JEREMIAH XLVI

Verses 1-12. In this chapter start the prophecies of Jeremiah, on all other peoples, beginning with Egypt. Pharaoh-Neco had stationed his troops at Carchemish by the Euphrates, only to be smitten by Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian king, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign.

The prophet described the whole array of war equipment to be readied—the buckler and the shield, the horses and the horseman, the spears and brigandines. Then why—in the name of God—do I see them dismayed, their brave men retreating and fear all about them? But they are not swift enough; they stumble and fall by the Euphrates River. Like the roaring sea did Egypt originally come up, confident of destroying the cities together with their people. And their screeching chariots were accompanied by the war-beaten Ethiopians, Lybians, and Lydians. But it was a day of God's revenge upon them with a terrible slaughter marking their defeat. Alas, no medicine will help Egypt, even in Gilead, for her rout and her shame are complete.

Verses 13-28. Here the second Egyptian-Babylonian war is described. The war call was sounded in all the

principal cities of Egypt. Even its strong men could not withstand God's thrust until it was deserted by her allies. Thus ended prematurely Egypt's big noise. She may now prepare her vessels of exile, for pretty Egypt is cut down along with her high officers who all together fled without stop in their day of misfortune. Her crying was loud, for her enemy even came with axes to cut her forests down. And so was it with her gods, her kings, and all who trusted in her, none of whom escaped punishment. But there will come a time when she will be restored to her former stature.

Israel, too, need not fear, for while other nations will be completely destroyed Israel will yet return from their captive lands to live peacefully in their own land.

JEREMIAH XLVII

Verses 1-7. This prophecy concerns the Philistines. The invasion from the north (Chaldea) is compared to an overflowing flood which will drown out the land and all therein amidst the howling of the people. The noise of the galloping horses will frighten parents even from saving their own children. The Philistines will be made impotent as an ally to Tyre and Zidon. Its chief cities Gaza and Ashkelon will be destroyed, as well as the rest of the valley. To stop the sword is out of the question, since it was let loose by God.

JEREMIAH XLVIII

Verses 1-47. This prophecy concerns Moab. Its principal cities will be invaded and shame will cover Moab.

These are some of the cities—Nebo, Kiriathaim, Misgab, Heshbon, Madmen. Moab's complete rout came because she was over-confident in her wealth and equipment, and therefore failed to retreat in time from before the enemy. Moab was living peaceably all the time without having been attacked before. Now she has found to her bitter surprise that she is entirely devoid of brave warriors. Those who knew strong and beautiful Moab will be shocked at her decisive defeat. Moab's defeat was the signal for a similarly bitter fate that would rapidly overtake many other lands, such as Dibon and Aroer. With the destruction of the cities in the plain country—eleven of which are mentioned by name—Moab's pride and strength are gone. Acting as if drunk, Moab has displayed arrogance toward God and ridicule and contempt toward (ruined) Israel. But disdainful and prideful Moab, now disillusioned, will have to look for refuge at some abandoned places. How heart-rending and mournful is Moab's plight. The joy of its busy harvest of fruits and vines has now been stilled. Moab's cry is coming up from all its great cities around the river Nimrim, for that waterway too has been destroyed. There is none now to worship its god. The prophet is overwhelmed with sorrow over the overflowing abundance of Moab that is no more. Instead it is now filled with all sorts of mourning spectacles. Moab's swift running from before the enemy has become a matter of laughter, and fright at the same time, to all the countries about her. Her arrogance against God proved her undoing as a people, for her troubles were fast and unrelenting. A fire has consumed Moab; low and high, her sons and daughters were taken captive. But this captivity of Moab will yet come back in due time.

JEREMIAH XLIX

Verses 1-6. This prophecy is referred to the Ammonites. In the name of God the prophet asks why have the Ammonites taken possession of the territory of Gad (after the latter were driven into exile by the Assyrians). Therefore will war and destruction catch up with the Ammonites, to make their land an eventual possession of Israel. There is mourning and hiding in the capital, for its god along with its priests and officers are off in exile. She relied upon her natural wealth, but her fear disorganized her, putting each one to flight. But her captivity will yet return.

Verses 7-22. This prophecy is of Edom. It looks as though Edom has lost its wisdom, for the people are fleeing and hiding in face of their misfortune. But none are spared, since their hiding places have been exposed. Ordinarily God would sustain their orphans and widows, but they are forsaken now. Better peoples have been punished, and so God swears that her calamity shall be manifold. You were quite low at your beginnings, but you became too presumptuous, and so you will be brought down from your heights. Edom will be entirely devastated even like Sodom and Gamorrah, much to the surprise of everybody. She will quickly be run off her land, for who can stop God? Her tremendous defeat will come about through the youngest of nations (Persia). The invasion will be swift, so that even her bravest will lose heart.

Verses 23-27. A prophecy of Damascus. Damascus was badly frightened when she first heard that the enemy was moving upon her. So beautiful and happy a city was not

fortified; its youth now have to fall in battle. The walls of Damascus will burn even to consume the palaces of (King) Ben-hadad.

Verses 28-33. A prophecy of Kedar, and the kingdoms of Hazor. These carefree wanderers with their huts and flocks would be easily scared and captured: such was Nebuchadnezzar's original idea. And so will their possessions become the spoils of their enemy and Hazor a dwelling for dragons.

Verses 34-39. A prophecy of Elam, at the beginning of King Zedekia's reign. Elam's bow will be broken and the people scattered to all the four corners of the world. But in due time Elam's captivity will be returned.

JEREMIAH L

Verses 1-46. This prophecy concerns Babylonia, the land of the Chaldeans. It should be proclaimed in detail to all the peoples that Babylonia was conquered by a northen power (Persia), turning the country into wasteland and putting her gods to shame. Misled, conquered, and mistreated Israel will now turn again toward Zion, where they will join in an everlasting covenant with God. Happy and fat-grown Babylonia will now become the target of accurate arrows which will reduce her to shame and to waste, so as to surprise and astonish every passerby. She is being repaid in kind, for such were her sins against others; therefore shall the arrows against her not be begrudged until her strength is broken and her farming and harvesting cut off. What Assyria began in its war upon Israel, Babylonia completed, but now Israel will return to its home clear of all sin and entirely forgiven. The hammer that crushed the world is now itself

broken, for Babylonia had striven against God until the implements of His anger were set against her. The news of Babylonia's invasion and defeat was carried to Zion by refugees. There shall be no escape for her until she meets with the same fate that she meted out to others, for she has been arrogant against God. The day of reckoning has come for the presumptuous one, and his cities will be burned in fire. The captors of Israel refuse to free him, but God will take up his quarrel until Babylonia trembles under the sword, with her officers and wise men. The sword will be swung against all and everything, until her land be inhabited by wild beasts, for it will be as completely destroyed as Sodom and Gamorah. The well equipped enemy will rush in, dispensing no mercy to anyone, while the news will dishearten Babylonia. She will be swiftly run off her land by the youngest of nations, for who can stop God's intent? The world will shake with her defeat and the nations will cry out (in fear).

JEREMIAH LI

Verses 1-64. In the name of God, a destructive spirit will be provoked upon Babylonia and, being fully prepared, will destroy her. This will prove that Israel is not forsaken by their God, for the guilty land is due for punishment. Let anyone who can escape from vengeance, and incurable Babylonia which has hitherto wrought confusion among peoples. This vindication of Israel will be told in Zion. That spirit will be embodied in the kings of the Medes, whose soldiers will fill up the rich Babylonia to inflict God's vengeance and carry His intentions to realization. The God who with wisdom created this

universe and provided rain and wind will prove the utter stupidity and shamefulness of the idolators, but such is not the lot of Jacob, whose God is the Creator of all things. Babylonia, who has hitherto served as God's battleaxe, will now herself, in retaliation for the wickedness she wrought in Zion, roll down into destruction, so that not a stone of hers might ever be used (to begin a new) foundation. The kings of the Medes and their allies are prepared to fulfill God's intention to turn Babylonia into a desolate place. The messengers who inform the king of the loss and destruction of one position after another will follow swiftly one after another. Here is where Babylonia has reached her climax in destroying and pillaging, especially in Zion; she will now be avenged in like manner. Drunk with hilarity she will fall asleep, never to wake up again. The pride of the world will be completely covered by the roaring waves and whatever it swallowed will be taken out again. Israel need not fear the coming of war, for this will spell the end of exile, since Babylonia together with her gods will now perish. Her strength will be of no avail when God's vengeance descends upon her to intoxicate her elite into everlasting sleep.

This book of prophecy Jeremiah gave to Seraiah, son of Neriah, to read before the people upon his coming to Babylonia, and then to tie a stone and sink it in the Euphrates river, as a sign of Babylonia's eventual submergence.

JEREMIAH LII

Verses 1-34. This chapter gives a brief recapitulation of the events in King Zedekiah's reign. Zedekiah was

twenty-one years old when he ascended the throne. His mother's name was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremia of Libnah. His deeds too were evil in the eyes of God. He revolted against the Babylonian king. It was in the ninth year of his reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, that Nebuchadnezzar's armies besieged Jerusalem. In the twelfth year of his reign, on the ninth day of the fourth month, the walls of the city were cracked open; this came about as a result of the famine inside the city, which weakened the resistance of the people. The soldiers fled during the night, and Zedekiah himself was captured by the Chaldeans at the plain of Jericho. He was brought before the Babylonian king, who after rebuking him, slew his children before his eyes as well as all the officers of Judah. Zedekiah's eyes were then put out, and with chains clamped upon him he was thrown into prison, where he stayed until the day of his death. And in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, on the tenth day of the fifth month, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, burned the Temple, the King's palace, and all the principal houses in Jerusalem. The rest of the people he drove into exile, and only the very poor were left in the land to become vinedressers and husbandmen. The Temple's furnishings and vessels of various metals he carried off to Babylonia. All in all (beginning with Jeconiah,) four thousand, six hundred were exiled.

And it was when Evil-merodach became King of Babylonia that he exonorated Jehoiachin King of Judah, and even put his throne above the other (captured) kings. His prison clothes were changed, after which he dined continually with the king, besides being given a subsidy for the rest of his life.

EZEKIEL

Chapter 1 and 10, also 40-48 were omitted. These chapters consist of technical descriptions which would not interest the general reader.

Chapters 1 and 10 describe the Merkabah — God's Chariot (throne) and chapters 40 - 48 describe for most part the architecture of the future Temple.

EZEKIEL II

Verses 1-10. After the prophet had seen the glory of God he fell upon his face and thereupon he heard a voice calling to him: Son of man, stand up upon your feet and I shall speak to you. This very calling filled the prophet with a spirit that got him up, whereupon he was told to go to Israel, a rebellious nation, and address them in the name of God. However, since their impudence and stiff-heartedness of today was a continuation of their fathers' transgressions toward God long ago, they might not listen to you; but may they know at least that there was a prophet among them. Whether they listen or not the prophet is urged not to fear their retorts as he should know that they are a rebellious house. He was handed a roll of a book written on both sides containing lamentations, and was told not to protest against it but to study it thoroughly.

EZEKIEL III

Verses 1-15. The prophet accordingly studied the entire content of the roll with diligence. He was then

told to address Israel verbatim as the language was their own and therefore was understandable to them. However, his message would sooner be heeded if he were to address it to many peoples whose language the prophet did not understand than to the impudent and hardhearted Israelites who utterly refuse to listen to God. But the prophet was urged again not to fear this rebellious house since the impact of his forcefulness will be more adamant than theirs. Without being distracted by their attitude the prophet was now told to proceed to his people of the captivity and urge upon them the words with which he was so well impressed. Thereupon the prophet was lifted by a spirit and from behind him he heard a voice of a great rushing, saying Blessed be the glory of God from His place. He also heard a similar noise from the wings of the living creatures and from the wheels over against them. Thus the spirit carried him away, impressed with God's prophecy though bitter in spirit, to the captivity at Tel-abib on the river Chebar, where he sat among them for seven days as if in a daze.

Verses 16-27. At the end of the seven days he was reminded by God that he was Israel's prophet and this was the warning he must issue to them. Now whether it be a wicked man who is to die for his sins or a hitherto righteous man gone wrong, the prophet's task is to warn them, become himself exonorated, or else bear the guilt of their punishment. He was then directed to go to the valley where he had seen God's glory as revealed to him at the river Chebar; whereupon he fell upon his face. After he was put back on his feet by a spirit he was to lock himself in his house in complete silence for another while, before rebuking them, and then speak to them only after he would be told again, paying no attention

to the nature of their attitude since they were so rebelious.

EZEKIEL IV

Verses 1-17. The prophet was now told to take a tile and portray the city of Jerusalem on it and all the conditions required to besiege a city—such as a fort, camps, and battering rams. He was also to put an iron pan in front of it to denote the wall and set it all before him to serve as a sign to the house of Israel. And in order that their sins be forgiven (so they be not entirely destroyed) the prophet was told to lie on his left side for 390 days, in which a day would be substituted for a year, and afterwards for another 40 days on his right side, again a day to stand for a year (a period of 430 years, comprising the time in which first Ephraim, 390, and then Judah, 40, offended against God). This he was rigidly to fulfill while facing the pictured siege against Jerusalem with uncovered arm. He was also to make a mixture out of wheat, barley, beans, and lentils as well as millet and spelt, from which he would make his bread, to eat during the time of his lying period. This bread as well as the water he would drink would not exceed a certain set measure per day. He was also to bake it upon the (dry) dung of man, to signify that so defiled will be the bread they will have to eat among the gentiles whither they will be driven. The dung of an animal was substituted only after the prophet had protested that he could not do this, since he had never in his life contaminated his soul in any way. It was also to signify that for lack of bread and water these items will be so rationed that the people in Jerusalem will eat in sorrow and drink in

despair. Thus will they in astonishment before one another be consumed for their iniquity.

EZEKIEL V

Verses 1-4. The prophet is commanded to take a sharp barber's razor and cut off his hair and beard; after which he is to divide the hair by weighing it into three equal parts, One part he is to burn in front of the city after the (symbolic) period of waiting is completed; and another part he is to smite with a sword, while the last third he is to throw to the wind and draw a sword after it. But of the last part he is to take some to tie in his skirt, after which he will take some to burn in fire as a symbol of the fire that will burn down the house of Israel.

Verses 5-17. God had put Jerusalem in the center of many lands which surround it. The result, however, was that instead of acting according to the laws and statutes of God, they despised them to the end that they acted even worse than the peoples about them, without imitating their better judgments. Therefore must their punishment be unprecedented and before the eyes of all the peoples. Children and parents shall consume one another and the rest of them shall be strewn to the wind. This unmerciful action must be taken because they have defiled what is holy with all kinds of abominations. This too is the meaning of the destruction of the hair in several ways. It is only after my revenge is wrought upon them, so that they learn that I am God that I will be comforted. This can only be after severe punishment by the sword, hunger, and the plague, that would ruin them and render them as a shame and as an example to the peoples about them.

EZEKIEL VI

Verses 1-7. The prophet is directed to face the mountains, rivers, and valleys in Israel, wherever idols and altars have been set up, and proclaim their eventual and complete destruction, with the people who worshiped them killed and strewn all about them. Thus will their deeds be erased, together with themselves.

Verses 8-14. It will be then that those who are left and scattered among the peoples will come to realize the inevitable result following the wake of their idol-worship, and blame themselves for their merited troubles. Therefore shall the prophet clasp his hands and stamp his foot and say alas to all the evil abominations done in Israel, and for which those far and near shall die in their various ways. And for this reason shall they die around the places of their idolatrous service, while the whole land, wherever they have lived, shall be rendered waste and desolate.

EZEKIEL VII

Verses 1-27. The prophet is proclaiming the end, the unmerciful end that is coming to Israel's land, to all its four corners simultaneously. This will be in strict accordance with their ways, and their abominations which have finally backfired. This coming end really spells the climax of all the troubles. That morning is coming wherein confusion will resound and not the usual echo of the mountains. The time is near when God's anger will be

as devastating as were your ways and abominations and so unmercifully will these ways and abominations work havoc among you that you will come to realize that it is God who is smiting you. The morning is here; the rod has blossomed, that rod of evil which has arisen through your violence. None of you or anything that stems from you is wanted, for there is none among you to be moved. Therefore let not the buyer rejoice nor the seller mourn, for neither of them shall in his lifetime come back to it, since they could not alter their sinful lives. They may blow the trumpet and have everything ready, but none shall go to battle, for my anger is upon their multitudes, whose destruction will come about through the sword, the plague, and the famine. Weakened and discouraged by their sins, many of them will escape to the mountains like a band of growling doves. There dressed in sackcloth will they mourn in horror and in shame. Their gold and silver will be abhorrent to them, since these will not help save them or satisfy them, as they were the cause of their iniquities. Their beautiful ornament (the Temple) held in esteem they ravaged with their abominable idols; therefore has it fallen into neglect and has become an easy prey for the wicked and for the robbers. The chains then may already be forged as a result of their bloody crimes and violence that fills the city. The worst of the peoples will then possess their houses, crush the pride of the fierce, and defile their holy places. And if peace be sought it shall not be found, but instead one misfortune shall follow another and one rumor the other, and neither shall there be found prophecy or Torah or counsel. The king as well as the masses will be seized with despair and it will be exactly as they willed it through their ways and desertions.

EZEKIEL VIII

Verses 1-18. It was in the sixth year (of Jehoiakin's exile), the fifth day of the sixth month, that a vision came upon the prophet while he was siting in his house with the elders of Judah before him. He saw a likeness that appeared as fire from his loins downward, and yet brighter from his loins upward, that took hold of him by his hair; and he was brought to Jerusalem to the door of the inner northward gate where stood the image that had roused jealousy. There was the glory of Israel's God even as he beheld it in the valley, which directed his sight toward the north, to the gate against the altar where stood this image. These great abominations—he was told—were intended to keep God from His holy place, and the abominations were yet greater. He was then brought to the door of the court, in whose wall there was a hole which he was to dig further; whereupon he found a door. When he came inside he saw portrayed upon the wall all forms of creeping things, abominable beasts, and idols of the house of Israel. There he found seventy men, at the head of whom was Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, all holding censers bringing up a thick cloud of incense. Do you see now—he was asked—what the elders of Israel are doing in the dark, each one in the chamber of his imagery? This is so because they believe that God does not see them and that He has forsaken the earth. But he is told that the abominations are still greater. He is then brought inside the door in the northern gate of the Temple, where he sees women sitting and weeping for Tammuz (an idol). But the abominations are still greater when he is brought into the inner court to the door be-

tween the porch and the altar, where twenty-five men with their backs to the Temple hall and their faces eastward bow down to the sun (in obscene fashion). This all in addition to the violence with which the land is filled. But the sting will come back into their own noses, for God will be unmerciful in His anger despite their loud calling to Him.

EZEKIEL IX

Verses 1-11. The prophet heard a loud voice calling upon those in charge of the city to advance with their destroying weapons. Thereupon six men came from the way of the higher gate facing north, each with his destructive instruments in his hand; and among them there was also one more, dressed in linen with a writer's inkhorn by his side. They all took up a position near the brass altar. The man with the inkhorn at his side was then instructed by the glory of the God of Israel to set a mark upon the foreheads of those men who were unhappy about these abominations in their midst. The other six were then instructed to follow and kill young and old, whether men, women, or children, except those with the marks on their foreheads. They began with the elders in front of the Temple and on instructions killed those inside the Temple as well as those in the city. And when the prophet cried that he was virtually the only one left, he was told that so great was the iniquity of Israel and Judah because they had filled the land with violence and perverseness in their belief that God had forsaken the earth and that He did not see all this. This unmerciful retribution was therefore well earned.

The man with the inkhorn on his side reported that he had carried out orders.

EZEKIEL XI

Verses 1-13. In his vision the prophet saw himself brought by a spirit to the east gate of the Temple, at which door he found twenty-five men among whom were the officers of the people, Jaazaniah the son of Azzur and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah. These were the mischievous people whose counsel to the city was not to mind the forebodings of the prophets about the impending doom, but to keep on building houses, since their stay in the city was as secure as the flesh in a pot. However the prophet warned them that this simile of the flesh in the pot would soon assume a different meaning from what they wished. This means that the sword of the enemy will make flesh out of them after he drives them to the border of the country outside the pot or the city. This is because you have filled the streets of the city with corpses according to the manner of the peoples about you instead of observing My statutes and doing according to My law. At this juncture Pelatiah the son of Benaiah fell dead, which incident impelled the prophet to plead to God not to make an end to the remnant of Israel.

Verses 14-25. In regard to the several exiles which had given the inhabitants of Jerusalem the satisfaction of thinking that those were the guilty ones in leaving the land given for possession, the prophet assured them that in those exilic lands their brethren will rather form little sanctuaries, until they all return unto the land of Israel, with the one idea of doing away with all the detestable

things and abominations. A new spirit shall overtake them whereby their stony hearts shall be replaced with hearts of flesh, that would make them observe laws and act according to them, so that they might be My people again and I their God.

The glory of God had now receded to the mountain east of the city and the spirit carried him back to exile into Chaldea, where he related this vision.

EZEKIEL XII

Verses 1-16. Israel can see and hear but since they are a rebellious house and refuse to see and hear, it was necessary for the prophet, according to God's instructions, to enact an exile scene to teach them an object lesson. The several vessels needed for that purpose were to be moved to a different place in broad daylight for all the people to watch; and in the evening he should break a hole in the wall; with pack on shoulder and with face covered, while everybody looked on, he should start on his way out. The prophet did so. The next morning when asked what all this meant, he was to tell them that he had demonstrated an exile scene which would take place in Jerusalem, whence the king would quietly and unseen steal out from his home, only to be captured later by the Chaldeans and brought to Babylonia, there to die without ever seeing that land. The people too would go into exile, and all the groups around the king would be scattered to all sides only to be pursued by the sword. Those who remained alive would be able to tell among the peoples of all their abominations, and become convinced of the presence of God.

Verses 17-28. The prophet was now told to eat his

bread with excitement and drink his water with trembling and care as a sign that so will the people in Jerusalem do before the land and its cities are reduced to waste and desolation, because of their violence.

The prophet warns the people against the false illusion produced by flattering divinations, that the end of the state is yet far off but rather that it is right at hand.

EZEKIEL XIII

Verses 1-16. The prophet is directed to foretell the fate of the false prophets whose only source for prophesying is their own heart and spirit. He calls them fools and likens them to foxes in a deserted house, who run pell-mell at the sign of danger, but would not persist in battle to mend the breaks in Israel's house. They are false visionaries who speak in the name of God, but whose words will never be realized. However, because they are deceiving the people by promising them peace where there is no peace, they shall not be included in the assembly of My people, neither shall their writings be recorded in the house of Israel nor will they enter its land again. A wall have the people erected (an illusion of security) and they (the false prophets) have daubed it with untempered mortar (untrue assurances of peace). But the elements, set against it by God's anger, will destroy this wall to its foundations; and what will then become of that untempered mortar?

Verses 17-23. The women in Israel too are in the business of prophesying. They do this ceremoniously by hanging specially made pillows upon the arms of the men they prophesy to, and kerchiefs upon their heads, and ask to be paid for this with food. Of course they pre-

dict misfortune to the good man and success to the bad one. But for this undeserved pain which they cause the good man and the encouragement they give to the wicked, though both types believe, will God destroy these pillows and kerchiefs and no more will these false divinations be spoken among My people, whom I shall save from their hands.

EZEKIEL XIV

Verses 1-11. A group of men from the elders of Israel came to visit the prophet whereupon he was informed by God that these men were preoccupied with idolatry both in thought and in action but yet he should not dismiss them. He was also to tell what he knew about them and yet would be willing to discuss things with them and appeal to them for repentance in an effort to convince them of the truth of God. In fact, this would be the attitude of the prophet toward any man or stranger in Israel. But should the prophet's appeal fail he would have to be convinced of the truth of God by being cut off in a manner to become a sign and a proverb to the people. The same punishment would be meted out the prophet who falsely claimed to speak in the name of God. This would be necessary to keep Israel from straying and from becoming contaminated through their iniquities—so that they might remain God's people.

Verses 12-23. God spoke to the prophet saying that a land which would trespass grievously against him could not be saved even if it contained such upright men as Noah, Daniel, and Job. (The first could not save the world from being destroyed, the second could not save his people, and the third could not save his family—

Mezudas). While they would save their own selves alone the land would be destroyed from man to beast through the four sore judgments of the sword, the famine, the noisome beast, and the pestilence. And yet would a remnant of sons and daughters be left in Jerusalem so that you may see them when they come to you (to Babylonia) and be convinced of their bad ways and deeds, and take comfort in the fact that Jerusalem was not destroyed in vain.

EZEKIEL XV

Verses 1-8. The word of God came to the prophet, that he consider the strength of the vine tree compared to the branch of any tree in the forest. Of course it was not the wood that one could work with or even to make a pin out of upon which to hang up a vessel. Now especially if the ends and the inside of such a piece of wood should be burned could it be used for any work? Now the people of Jerusalem were of no use, precisely like that burned piece of vine tree wood. As they have begun to be burned so will they be consumed by the fire, while the land becomes desolate because they have committed a trespass against God; and will learn of Him only when He is set against them.

EZEKIEL XVI

Verses 1-14. The prophet is bidden by God to let Jerusalem know her abominations. As a matter of fact by birth you hail from Canaan where your father could as well have been an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. And when you were born you were entirely neglected, for you were abandoned in a field in a most disgusting

condition, with nobody to attend to your cleanliness and well being. It was only when I passed you by and saw you rolling in your own blood that I said to you, Live despite your blood, Live despite your blood. From then on you have flourished as the bud in the field and you have grown in splendor to full maturity, though still altogether exposed. It was at this time of love that I took you under my protection and covered your nakedness, and then I swore to you and entered into a covenant with you, after which you belonged to Me, said God. I then washed your blood away, anointed you with oil, dressed you in the most beautiful cloths, put the most exquisite ornaments upon you, and gave you the best food to eat, after which you became beautiful enough to be a queen. You were so completely beautiful through My comeliness which I have put upon you that your renown went forth among the peoples.

Verses 15-34. But this beauty and renown encouraged you to your glamour upon one and all in an inimitable manner. Your clothes, your precious ornaments, your excellent food which I have given you, you have put at the service of your strange lovers, with whom you have engaged in a most officious manner. Entirely unmindful of the terrible plight of your youth, you have even sacrificed to them your children that were born to me. But woe, woe, said God, for all this wickedness of yours. You have built high places on every principal road for your rendezvous, and you have disgraced your beauty by submitting yourself to every passerby. You have even submitted yourself to the overgrown flesh of the Egyptians in order to provoke Me to anger. All this of course will have Me reduce your allotted food and I shall hand you over to your enemies, the daughters of the

Philistines, who feel ashamed of your lewd ways. But you proved so insatiable that you also played the whore with the Assyrians and even unto the Chaldeans, How unfortunate it was for you to indulge so brazenly. You have built your high places on all the principal roads and in all the streets, where you received your strange lovers with such zeal and impertinence that, strangely enough, you did not even care to get your reward from them.

Verses 35-59. But for all this behavior of yours I shall gather all those that you were sweet to and that you made love to as well as those whom you hated, and afterwards I shall judge you as women who break wedlock and shed blood are judged. I shall hand you over to them and they will strip you of your clothes and your precious ornaments and will leave you entirely exposed. A mob of them will then stone you, cut you, and burn your houses, and thus stop you from playing the harlot any more, after which My anger and My jealousy shall quiet down. This will have to be done to you because you failed to remember the days of your youth, for which thoughtlessness you will have to pay since you angered Me so. You will then become the proverbial match of your cast-out neighbors, where your mother will be called Hittite and your father Amorite. In your abominable ways you will be considered as exceeding Shomron on your left and Sodom on your right. Verily you have excelled Sodom in your doings which would not support the poor when they lived amidst prosperity and idleness. But for this haughtiness I have done away with them as I saw fit. And in so far as Shomron is concerned she did not sin half as much as you, which would tend to justify her against you and would make you bear the shame which at one time you expressed for

her. And after those are restored then will you be restored among them, as you will have to bear your shame more for the comfort which you have given them. After them will you be restored to your original position, for was not Sodom condemned by you in the day of your pride, before you began to imitate the daughters of Aram and of the Philistines round about you in wickedness?

You will bear of course the burden of your lewdness and your abominations, as you insulted your vow so as to break your covenant.

Verses 60-63. But as I remember the covenant which I made with you in your youth I will reestablish it with you forever. And when I enlarge your possessions outside of the terms of your covenant then will you feel ashamed of your former ways. After I make my covenant with you and forgive you for your past you will be so ashamed that you will not complain any more about that which you have gone through.

EZEKIEL XVII

Verses 1-10. The prophet was bidden to introduce this theme with a parable. There came a great eagle with long wings and with feathers of divers colors to (the forest) of Lebanon and took from there the highest branch of the cedar. He also cropped off the top of the young branches, which he brought to the land of the merchants. But he also planted a willow tree from the seed of the land, by the great waters. It grew into a low spreading vine with branches turned inward and with roots underneath. But this vine bent its roots toward another great eagle to water it, though it was well planted to grow into a goodly vine of many branches and fruit.

Naturally it could not prosper, for the first eagle would easily uproot the tree and let its leaves and fruit wither away, or would have the water in the furrows dry up.

Verses 11-21. Now let the rebellious house know that this refers to Jerusalem's king and officers whom the Babylonian king carried off into Babylonia. But while he took away the mighty of the land he made a pact with one of the royal offspring that he keep his kingdom subdued, to which the latter gave his oath. Thereupon, however, he revolted against him and sent envoys to Egypt to obtain horses and an army. Could this breaking of a pact succeed? God swears that for this despising of the oath and for this breaking of the pact he shall be killed in Babylonia. This is a trespass against God for which he shall meet with humiliating defeat and wherein the Pharaoh can help him little. His army must fall through the sword and those left will be scattered on all sides.

Verses 22-24. But the time shall come when God will take from the young branches of that tall cedar and plant them upon the high mountain in Israel, where it will grow into a magnificent cedar with branches and fruit and under which shade fowl of every kind shall dwell. Then will all the trees of the field (other nations) know that God has realized His promise that He would bring down the high tree and exalt the low tree.

EZEKIEL XVIII

Verses 1-32. The prophet explains the mistake in the proverb which was then current among the people in the land of Israel. The proverb was that the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.

In fact—says the prophet—the lives of both father and son mean the same to God. It is the sinful soul that must die. But what makes a man just, in the sense that he has practiced what is lawful and right? He has not participated in Israel's idolatrous feasts or worshiped idolatry in any way; nor defiled his neighbor's wife or lived with a menstruous woman; nor defrauded anyone, but restored to the debtor his pledge (in the evening); nor spoiled any by violence, but has given his bread to the hungry, covered the naked with a garment; nor given his money for usury or taken an increase; nor committed any other crimes; he has executed true judgment between man and man, kept the statutes of God and His judgments for the sake of dealing truthfully. Such is the just man who will surely live. However, should he have a son, a robber a shedder of blood who would commit against his fellow any one of these crimes (substantially the same as before enumerated) he shall die of his own guilt. On the other hand, should he have a son who upon seeing the misdeeds of his father refrained from doing likewise (substantially the same sins are again enumerated), he shall not die for the sins of his father but he shall surely live. His father, however, shall die in his iniquity. In a word, each one shall live or die in accordance with the nature of his deeds. Also should the wicked man repent he will be forgiven and live, for God does not desire the death of the wicked but that he repent. On the other hand, should the just man turn against his good behavior and begin to sin he shall die for his sins. The prophet stresses this correct way of God, and appeals to the people to cast away their transgressions and be seized with a new heart and a new spirit. And why should you die, since it is not death that God desires but that you repent and live?

EZEKIEL XIX

Verses 1-14. The prophet is told to raise a lamentation about the kings of Israel. He pictures mother as a lioness raising her whelps among the lions and one whelp of which learned to prey upon and devour men. But when the nations learned of him they captured him and brought him in chains to Egypt. Amidst despair she put up another of her whelps as a young lion who too learned to prey upon and devour men. He even rendered the land and all therein desolate by the noise of his roaring. But he too was captured by the nations and brought in chains into Babylonia so that his voice may not be heard again upon Israel's mountains. True, the mother was like a fruitful and branched out vine planted by many waters and her stature was exalted among the thick branches but she was uprooted with fury from the ground and her strength was broken and her fruits dried up. And now she is planted in a wilderness with her branches and fruits all burned up so that not a rod could be taken from her to be used as a sceptre wherewith to rule. This indeed is a veritable lamentation.

(The mother refers to the house of King Josiah and the young lions to the several kings whose misrule rendered them vulnerable to be conquered by the different enemies.)

EZEKIEL XX

Verses 1-44. It was in the seventh year of Jeconiah's exile, on the 10th day of the 5th month, that several men from the elders of Israel came to visit the prophet for

the purpose of imploring God. However, God swore that He would not respond, and instead directed the prophet to lay before them the historical guilt of the nation. The prophet began by relating God's concern for Israel as His chosen people while they were yet in Egypt. He promised then to take them out and bring them into a beautiful land flowing with milk and honey. However, He told them to discard Egyptian idolatry, not to contaminate themselves with it. This they failed to do, and yet in order that God's name may not be disparaged He took them out from Egypt nevertheless and brought them into the wilderness. There He gave them the various laws, among which was the Sabbath, a sign that they were now sanctified unto God. Although these laws were aimed to keep them alive, still they failed to obey them. It was then that He had intended not to bring them into the beautiful land, but again in His mercy He would not destroy them. He then appealed to their children to obey these laws, so that they might live, but here too He had met with the same results; whereupon He had sworn that He would scatter them among the lands though, not to have His name disparaged, He would not destroy them now. (In their perverseness) they turned My laws into things of no good, whereby one could not live; they burned their firstborn as a sacrifice to the idol (Molech), when these sons were to be their gift to Me (each would be especially mindful of his devotion to God, and therefore was to be redeemed by the priest). The same idolatrous ways were repeated after they were brought into the land though they were rebuked therefor. Was it at all possible for God now to respond to their implorations? Make no mistake, however, in thinking that now you can be like the other nations, the idol-worshipers. Verily, God

swears He will rule over you with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with a wrath poured out, if need be. In such manner He shall even gather you from all the lands where you were scattered to bring you to trial, much as He dealt with your fathers. That will be the time when the peoples will be in a wilderness. But before you are brought back into the bond of the covenant I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgressed against Me so that they may never come back into the land of Israel. But in so far as you are concerned it would be better that you give yourself to idol worship entirely rather than to defile My Holy name by not listening to Me. And as for Me I shall rather wait for complete devotion to Me after I take you out from among the peoples and the lands where unto you have been scattered, into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. There will you recall your corrupt ways by which you were contaminated and for which you will blame yourselves after you come to realize that I have not dealt with you in accordance with those evil ways of yours, but rather as it would befit My name.

EZEKIEL XXI

Verses 1-20. The prophet is bidden to face south and prophesy on the forest there, that its trees, whether green or dry, will burn down completely by a fire coming from the north so that everybody would then come to realize that it was nothing else but an act of God. However, the prophet complained to God that in his talking in parables the people would not take him seriously. Thereupon he was told by God that he was meant to face Jerusalem and prophesy upon the land of Israel, that its righteous

as well as its wicked would be cut off by the sword. Also that the same sword would destroy all flesh on the way southward. The prophet was also told to sigh bitterly before the people so that when asked he might tell them of the terrible catastrophe that was coming. The sword has been sharpened and furbished for the slaughter so that it may be handled effectively in a way as to defy any rod made of wood, and since it is directed against My people there is of course no room for joy but for crying and mourning. This rod threatens to put an end to My already sorely tried people. Woe, for this carefully guarded sword coming for the third time is about to redouble the great slaughter.

Verses 21-32. There upon the crossroads stands the Babylonian King, ready with all sorts of divinations to prove to himself upon which side, right or left, he should converge his armies and all the implements of war; but alas it points to the right toward Judah and not toward the Ammonites. These divinations sound false and impossible, but by your obviously sinful deeds you have made them possible. The end of iniquity has come and with it the final day of Israel's wicked king. But though the crown is lifted yet will this great misfortune not be for long, for the one whom I will permit to execute justice is bound to come.

Verses 33-37. Now in so far as you Ammonites are concerned, who were so sure that regarding you the divinations were false and that the sword was really directed against the wicked whose day had come, when the iniquities must end, after which the sword will return into the sheath, know you therefore that these masters of destruction will also invade your land to pour My anger upon you and to destroy you there.

EZEKIEL XXII

Verses 1-16. The prophet was bidden to make his accusations against the bloody city (Jerusalem). The blood spilled in it renders it guilty and the practice of idolatry contaminates it. This will bring your day nearer, when you will be derided from far and near because you have defiled your name through your undisciplined condition. The dignitaries in Israel are exercising a strong arm for the purpose of spilling blood. Father and mother are disregarded; the stranger is oppressed; the orphan and the widow are defrauded; everything that is holy is despised, and the Sabbath is defiled. The slanderers cause blood to spill; on the mountains you carry on idolatrous feasts; and lewdness is committed among you. The stepmother and the menstruous woman have been mistreated; the like has also happened to your neighbor's wife, to the daughter-in-law, to the stepsister. Bribes have been taken to cause bloodshed; you have taken usury and increase, and you have aggrandized yourselves through oppression of your neighbor. Alas for your robbery and your bloodshed! Can you withstand the days that are sure to come upon you? You will be scattered among the peoples and in many lands and there will the filthiness be stamped out from you to your own surprise, in full view of the peoples. Then will you realize that it is from God.

Verses 17-22. Israel is an alloy of many metals, instead of being pure silver. But after I gather them into Jerusalem it will become the crucible of fire wherein they melt. Then will they realize that God has poured His wrath upon them.

Verses 23-31. The land has not been cleansed in any

way for the day of indignation. The band of false prophets is like a roaring lion at its prey, eating away its strength and its preciousness. The widows are on the increase, the priests have violated the Torah and every distinction between the holy and the secular and between the unclean and the clean; the Sabbath they have disregarded entirely and so am I profaned among them. Her officers are like preying wolves who kill people for self aggrandizement. Her prophets betray them with false and pretentious visions. The plain people rob the poor and the stranger without justice; and there is not one among them to stem the tide against its destruction. Therefore have I poured my fury upon them accordingly.

EZEKIEL XXIII

Verses 1-35. The prophet calls the State of Ephraim with its Capital Shomron, Oholah, and the State of Judah with the capital Jerusalem, Oholibah, two women, daughters of one mother nation. Being used to a life of whoredom while yet in Egypt since their early youth, Oholah fell in love with the militarily elegant Assyria and thereupon contaminated herself with their idols. At the same time she kept up her whoring practices with Egypt. Finally she was shamefully destroyed by her lover Assyria. Her sister Oholibah was not deterred by all this, however, and she too made love to Assyria even more so than Ohalah. Moreover, upon seeing a description of the brave and organized Chaldeans she sent her envoys there, to declare herself in love with them all—which estranged her from Me as it was with her sister. At the same time she carried on her earliest love affair with the Egyptians, whose flesh is as that of asses and whose issue

is as that of horses. In the end Oholibah will be punished by her lovers, who will attack her with their complete military force and their elegant uniforms, stripping her entirely of her wealth and her glory. This will do away with her lewdness, and she will never mention Egypt again. Because she imitated her sister, Oholibah will drink from the same cup of astonishment and desolation when in deep hatred she will be deprived of her toil and left naked and exposed by those whom she revolted against. She will have to bear the brunt of her lewdness because she preferred to forget God.

Verses 36-49. Such were the abominations of Oholah and Oholibah. Their lives were filled with adultery, bloodshed, sacrifice of their children to the idol (Molech), desecrating the Sabbath, and defiling My sanctuary. On top of all this they sent their envoys to the peoples all around, to invite them to elaborate affairs and big parades, and honoring them with exquisite gifts. Though of age yet would they not cease from their lewd ways. They will therefore be sentenced to destruction by better people than they are. Thus will I stamp out their lewdness, that they will become an example to the other women. Surely they will have earned it.

EZEKIEL XXIV

Verses 1-14. It was in the ninth year (of Zedekiah's reign), the 10th day of the 10th month, that the prophet received word from God that he note down the date, for it was on this day that the Babylonian king began his campaign against Jerusalem.

The prophet was told to speak of this siege to the

rebellious house in parable form. The city is compared to a pot set on the stove with water and the best parts of the meat boiling hard. The scum is in the pot, from which the pieces are pulled out at random (those destined for exile). Their bloodshed is obvious and so will My revenge be. Let therefore everything in the pot melt and burn so that the scum too be finished. Too tiresome were your lies; that scum must be burned out. You refused to be cleansed from your pollution; it will have to be done through My wrath. It will be without mercy or retreat, just as you have earned it.

Verses 15-17. The prophet was told that his wife, the desire of his eye, would suddenly die. He was told not to perform any mourning acts such as crying, taking the shoes off, wearing tephillin on his head, not covering his lips or eating the meal of another. He told the people about it in the morning, and his wife died in the evening. When he was asked the reason for his behavior he told them in the name of God that so must they behave now that the Temple, the excellency of their strength, the desire of their eyes, and that which their soul desired, has been profaned, and now that their equally cherished sons and daughters which they left behind are falling by the sword. The prophet was to be their example at this time. (They were not to mourn because there was none to console them anyway.) The prophet was told to begin his talks to the people when the refugee came with the news (of Jerusalem's destruction).

EZEKIEL XXV

Verses 1-17. The prophet was now to direct his pro-

phecy toward the Ammonites. The land of the Ammonites will become the possession of the children of the east, whose homes they will occupy and whose food they will eat, while their capital will be turned into a home for the camels and flocks. This will be their punishment for the joy they expressed over the profanation of the Temple, the desolation of Israel's land and the children of Judah being sent into exile. They rejoiced with spite toward Israel's land, clasping their hands and stamping their feet. As a people with a country they will therefore no longer exist among the nations.

Even as Ammon will not be mentioned among the nations so will Moab's fate be. She too will be punished when her beautiful cities situated on the border will be opened to the enemy. Moab said that the house of Judah was the same as that of all the peoples.

Edom will experience God's revenge and fury when it becomes a total ruin along with its principal city Dedan. Edom greatly offended when it inflicted its vengeance upon the house of Judah.

With an everlasting and destructive hatred and with spite have the Philistines inflicted their revenge upon Judah. With an equal revenge from God will they therefore be destroyed.

EZEKIEL XXVI

Verses 1-14. The word of God concerning Tyre came to the prophet in the 11th year (of Zedekiah's reign), on the first day (of the fifth month). Jerusalem was the business center for many peoples and its destruction filled Tyre with the rejoicing that it would now take over. Tyre

will therefore be overrun by many peoples who will destroy its walls and make scorched earth of it, a place in the midst of the sea for the drying of nets. Its suburbs likewise will go down by the sword. This destruction of Tyre will be brought about by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, the king of kings, who by reason of his great army, horses, chariots, and riders, as well as all the weapons and means of war, will invade the land as if through cracked walls. But before everything is destroyed and the earth scorched they will take all its wealth and merchandise. Tyre, by God's decree, shall never be rebuilt.

Verses 15-18. Tyre's fall and slaughter will shake the isles. In astonishment will all the princes of the sea come down from their thrones, take off their precious robes, and, sitting upon the ground, raise a lamentation and wonder over the loss of such a mighty and famous maritime land, which struck terror to all. Now that it has made its exit, all the isles will really tremble.

Verses 19-21. Now that Tyre is ruined and covered by many waters and has joined the ancient peoples in the low parts of the earth, I shall restore the glory to the land of the living (the land of Israel). A phantom will it become, never to be found even when searched for.

EZEKIEL XXVII

Verses 1-36. This is a lamentation on Tyre, the international center of trade for many isles, and considered a thing of perfect beauty. It was situated in the midst of the seas. Its ship timbers came from the fir trees of Senir, its masts from the cedars of Lebanon; its oars came from the oaks of Bashan; its rudder from the ivory of the

isles of the Kitties; its sail of fine linen with embroidered work came from Egypt; its coverings of blue and purple from the isles of Elishah; its mariners came from Sidon and Arvad; its pilots from the wise men of Tyre itself; its repair men from the wise men of Gebal; its ships and mariners were its own. Its glorious fighting army was recruited from Persia, Lud and Put; its beauty was rounded out by the alert sentries from the men of Arvad and the Gammadim. Tarshish traded in silver, iron, tin, and lead; Javan, Tubal and Meshech in humans and brass vessels; Togarmah in horses, horsemen, and mules. Dedan paid for Tyre's merchandise with horns of ivory and ebony; Aram (Syria) traded in emeralds, purple, and embroidery work, fine linen, coral, and agate; Judah and the land of Israel in wheat of Minnith, balsam, oil, and balm; Damascus traded in the wine of Helbon and white wool; Vedan and Javan in bright iron, cassia, and calamus; Dedan traded in precious cloths for chariots; Arabia and all the princes of Kedar in lambs and rams and goats; the merchants of Sheba and Raamah in spices, precious stones, and gold. Haran, Canneh, Eden, the merchants of Sheba and Asshur, traded in all sorts of things, in blue cloths and embroidered works and in chests of rich apparel bound with cords and made of cedar. The ships of Tarshish were the fleet to carry the extensive load of your merchandise. But your wealth, your mariners, your men of war all sank into the sea in the day of your fall. There was bitter mourning all around over Tyre, whose business and wealth had supported and enriched many peoples. The people of the isles and the merchants of the nations were shocked at your fate. You have become like a wraith which is no more.

EZEKIEL XXVIII

Verses 1-10. The king of Tyre, because of his position in the midst of the sea, began to think of himself as being impregnable, as God, and wiser than the all knowing Daniel. His wealth and his business enterprises he considered the result of his own wisdom and understanding. These conditions, however, brought about the strange and powerful enemy, against whose sword the beauty of your wisdom and your brightness faded away with your people going down as corpses into the sea. Your killer, of course, will not accept your idea that you are God.

Verses 11-19. A lamentation shall be raised over the king of Tyre; the personification of wisdom and beauty. Your covering is studded with the most precious stones as if you were in God's Garden of Eden. Your craftsmanship in wind instruments is as if it were preserved for the day you were born. Like the outspread cherub, so saintly were you, actually walking amidst stones of fire. You were perfect from the day you were born until iniquity set in with you. Due to your great business dealings you were filled with violence; you have sinned, and thus, cherub, have you perished from amidst the stones of fire. Your proudness of heart has corrupted your wisdom and your brightness, and like a fire from within you has it burned you up in full view of kings and all spectators. Whoever knew you among the nations was shocked: like a wraith were you which is no more forever.

Verses 20-26. This prophecy is directed toward Zidon. Zidon's punishment through blood, plague, and the sword will spell God's glory, for they shall no more be a griev-

ing thorn to the house of Israel, full of spite toward them. Equally so will the restoration and prosperity of Israel in his own land spell God's saintliness in the eyes of the nations.

EZEKIEL XXIX

Verses 1-16. It was in the tenth year (of Zedekiah's reign) on the 12th day of the tenth month that the word of God came to the prophet that he direct his prophecy against the pharaoh and the whole of Egypt. In regard to the pharaoh, the great dragon of the river, which he claims as his as he has made it, now he will be dragged out from there with all fishes clinging to his scales (along with his people). Altogether they will be left strewn in the wilderness as food for the beasts and the fowl. This will be so because they served only as a reed to the house of Israel which broke as they leaned upon it renting their shoulder in the process. Egypt will therefore become desolate in the wake of the sword which will annihilate men and beast alike. The river which he claims to be his will fare no better and the desolation will spread from the tower of Syrene even unto the border of Ethiopia. Egypt will thus be counted among the ruined lands with its people scattered among the nations. This devastating condition will last for 40 years after which its people will be restored into their native land though they shall from thereon be an insignificant kingdom among the nations. Egypt shall no more be considered as a support to the house of Israel and thus as a reminder of their transgression.

Verses 17-21. Because Nebuchadnezzar king of Baby-

lon expended too many men and too much energy in conquering Tyre, which offset his small return in profit, he will be given in addition the spoils of Egypt, which fate the latter well earned. It will be then (after the 40 years) that Israel's rebirth will begin to bud and Ezekiel will be quoted in connection with it.

EZEKIEL XXX

Verses 1-16. It is a woeful day that is about to come, a clouded day for the peoples. With Egypt's fall all her allies—among them Ethiopia, Lybia, Lud, and Cub—will go down by the sword. Thus will the pride of Egypt's power break as the sword makes its way up from the tower of Syene. With the breakdown of her allies Egypt will become once more a desolated country. Careless Ethiopia is about to be the next victim, as the first scouts of the enemy send shivers through her. Thus will Egypt together with her wealth be handed over to a strange and wicked enemy, while her people will be reduced by the sword. The enemy is Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, whose people are the terror of the nations. Egypt will be haunted by fear as its idols are destroyed. Its king will be no more and its great cities will be ruined. This second war, to be waged against Egypt, will break her completely, so that there will be no medicine to restore her arms, that she might hold up a sword again (the first war took place during the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, King of Judah). On the other hand the arms of the king of Babylon will be greatly strengthened, as Egypt's people will partly die, and the rest will be scattered through many lands.

EZEKIEL XXXI

Verses 1-2. The prophet is about to describe the strength and grandeur of Assyria, and yet it could not withstand the onslaught of the enemy. In the light of this phenomenon—asks the prophet—is it at all possible for Egypt to think that it would fare better? These words of God came to the prophet in the 11th year (of Zedekiah's reign) on the first day of the 3rd month.

Verses 3-9. Assyria grew to be a beautiful and tall cedar of Lebanon, due to the many waters that surrounded it. Its boughs and branches were so many and long that within them many a bird made its nest and under them the beasts of the field brought forth their young; so did many nations find protection in the shade of Assyria. In the garden of God (world) there could not be found another cedar tree to be compared to the beauty of this one, nor could the boughs and branches of the fir and chestnut trees compare to those of this tree. Verily the tree aroused the envy of all the others.

Verses 10-18. But what destroyed this tree was its pridefulness. Its boughs and branches were broken down and left strewn upon the mountains and by all the rivers of the land, by strange and terrible peoples. This was really in accordance with its wickedness. The nations of the earth could no more find protection in its shade; only the fowl and the beasts could now dwell upon its fallen branches. This should serve as a lesson to all the trees that should they permit their pride to become too great they would go down to the lower parts of the earth. There was great mourning when it went down into the grave and its waters were shut off while Lebanon, and all the trees were

enveloped in darkness. Peoples were shaken at its fall and down in the pit there was many another nation that found consolation upon seeing it there too. Can the Pharaoh and his multitudes compare in glory and greatness to Assyria whom they will soon join in the lower parts of the earth?

EZEKIEL XXXII

Verses 1-16. These words from God came to the prophet in the 12th year (of Zedekiah's reign) on the first day of the 12th month.

This is a lamentation over Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who poses as a young lion when he is only a whale who would muddle up the waters of his and others' rivers. But he will be caught by a throng of many people who would let his flesh be strewn upon the field and mountains, as food for the fowl and the beasts. The flooded land will now be flooded with blood as so will also its streams. Its light will be put out and the resulting smoke will cover up the lights of the heavens to cause darkness over the land. Many nations will become excited upon hearing the news of your misfortune. They will tremble every minute as the sword flies past them on the day of your fall. Surely the sword of the king of Babylon will get to you. There will be none to muddle the waters when your pride and your people fall through the sword of the brave and terrible nation, while the land will be rendered desolate and its contents destitute. This is indeed for everybody to lament.

Verses 17-32. The following words from God came to the prophet on the 15th day of the month. Wail for the multitudes of Egypt as they go down to the lower parts of

the earth, where Egypt will find nations whom she did not surpass in beauty and who would welcome her now along with her allies. Around her grave she will find the following nations who in their time struck terror in the living world and so carried their shame with them. Asshur, Elam, Meshech, Tubal and all their multitudes, Edom, the princess of the north, and the Zidonians. And while Egypt did not die like the mighty who are accorded honor and ceremony at their death, she will be consoled by the similar slain corpses of the peoples about her. This will be done by God's terror in the land of the living.

EZEKIEL XXXIII

Verses 1-20. The prophet addresses the people.

In the case of war a watchman is put up to alert the people, and should one fail to heed the alert and be killed there would be none to blame for it. However, should the watchman fail to sound the alert and as a result one were killed, the watchman would be held responsible though that man had died because of his sins.

Now the prophet is Israel's watchman who is to alert the wicked man of the fatal consequences of his behavior. And from then on the prophet, if he has done so, is free of any guilt should the man die for his sins. The house of Israel feels itself guilty and has therefore given up all hope of living, but really God does not seek the death of the wicked but that he repent and live. Why then should you, the house of Israel, die? In fact a person is judged according to his immediate behavior. The just man will die if he should begin to sin; the wicked will

live if he repent and do what is just and right. As, for instance, restore the pledge (to the poor when he needed it) and give up what he has robbed and resume walking in the statutes of life (Torah). This therefore is the correct way of judgment, and not as the people are wont to think.

Verses 21-29. It was in the 12th year (of Jeconiah's exile) on the 5th day of the 10th month, that the refugee came from Jerusalem to report that the city had been destroyed. The prophet, however, began to prophesy the evening before, and had not ceased to do so from then on. (See chapter 24.)

The remaining people in the ruined land of Israel seem to think that from now on the land is theirs, since possession of the land does not depend upon numbers because it was given to Abraham when he was only one person. However, is it possible for them to possess the land if such are their crimes—their food tinged with blood, their eyes looking toward idolatry, shedding blood, relying upon the sword, committing abominations, defiling one's neighbor's wife? Verily, they shall die for it by the sword, from which they shall find no escape, while the land shall become most desolate where the pomp of strength shall cease .

Verses 30-33. God informs the prophet that while the people consider his words a lovely song to be played on an instrument, and flock to listen to him, yet they are really not sincere about it, for they ridicule him privately among themselves and still persist in their unscrupulous ways. But—warns the prophet—when the trouble comes they shall then know that a prophet was among them.

EZEKIEL XXXIV

Verses 1-31. The prophet is bidden to direct his prophetic protest against the shepherds of Israel. Instead of feeding the flocks they feed themselves. They have appropriated for themselves the fats, the wool, and the well-fed animals, but have never taken care to keep the flock in a state of health or from being dispersed. In the end they did disperse, wandering about, uncared for, all over the earth, for the beasts of the field to eat them.

God will therefore stop the shepherds from caring for the sheep and will himself gather His sheep together, as does the faithful shepherd to His scattered flock on a dark and cloudy day. He will gather them from all the peoples and all the lands, and will bring them back to the good pastures and the good folds upon the mountains and by the rivers of their own land. He will Himself feed his sheep, keep them together, take care of their health, and punish the unruly ones. In a word, He will feed them with judgment. The struggle between the sheep too will be stopped. The strong will not be permitted to feed on the best pasture and to drink the clear water, and then to tread upon and foul the rest, which the lean ones must use for their food and drink.

There is one shepherd whom God will set up over them, and that will be (a descendant of) David, and he shall rule them under God. Amidst peace, security and prosperity will they live in their own land. They shall no more be a prey for the nations who exploited them, being themselves consumed by hunger, and they will no more bear the insults of the nations. A plant of renown

will they become, so that they will know that they are God's people and men (not like cattle).

EZEKIEL XXXV

Verses 1-15.The prophet is bidden to address himself to mount Seir and declare that its cities, as well as the whole land, are fated for complete desolation. This punishment is in store for them because they displayed an everlasting hatred toward Israel at the time of the latter's misfortune, when by aid of the sword they handed them (Israel's fugitives) over to the enemy. This hatred for the blood (of your fellowmen) will pursue you until your blood is spilled. Every place in your land will be filled with your corpses and your desolation will be forever, with your cities never to be inhabited again. You have blasphemed the two nations (Judah and Israel) and your designs were to appropriate their lands for yourself, now that they were ruined. You will therefore be repaid according to your anger and your envy, which stemmed from your hatred for them; God has also heard your boasting and ranting against Him. But your joy over the prospect of taking possession of Israel's inheritance, will be matched by your ultimate ruin, while in (Israel's) land there will be rejoicing again.

EZEKIEL XXXVI

Verses 1-15. The prophet addresses himself to mountains, valleys, rivers, in the land of Israel, as well as to its desolate wastes and forsaken cities. These the enemy nations round about, overwhelmed and puffed with joy

meant in their viciousness to appropriate for themselves. They thought it had become the object of their prey and derision, now that it was an abandoned lot. But God swears, in the fire of His jealousy and His fury, that this shame which the peoples put upon you to bear will be thrust upon them. You, however, will be rehabilitated in your land, for a life of prosperity and abundance as never before. And when you are told that your land casts its people out, you may be assured that you will never be cast out again or made to bear shame again.

Verses 16-38. Israel through their vile actions and idolatry contaminated the land and well deserved to be scattered among the peoples and in many lands, but as a result My name was profaned among those peoples, who pointed at them saying, "These are God's people, but had to get out of His land." It is therefore for My sake alone that I will re-establish you in your land and cleanse you from your contaminations. I shall then put a new heart and a new spirit into you, whereby your heart of stone will be replaced with a heart of flesh. This will bring about that you will walk in My statutes and you will observe and do according to My laws. Also as a result you will enjoy abundance in the land of your fathers, where you will no more bear the shame of hunger among the peoples. When you reflect upon your evil ways and wrong actions, you will then come to realize that you have only yourselves to blame. Know you therefore that I am doing this not because you earned it. When your desolate and demolished land will be rebuilt then will all the peoples about you know that it was I who fulfilled my promise. The once ruined cities will be teeming with men, like a flock, as the Holy Flock, the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts.

EZEKIEL XXXVII

Verses 1-14. The prophet relates how the spirit of God has taken hold of him and carried him off to the valley full of bones. As he skirted around the valley he noticed the bones to be very many and very dry. Thereupon God asked the prophet if these bones in his opinion could live—to which the prophet answered, You know. He was then bidden to address his prophecy to these dry bones and to inform them of God's word that they would be brought back to life. Sinews, flesh, and skin would grow on them, after which breath would enter into them, so that they could live and know of the powers of God. As the prophet spoke there was a noise and a shaking whereupon the bones began to come near one another. As he looked at them he noticed the sinew, flesh, and skin gradually coming up on them. As he addressed the wind on all four corners it began to blow breath into them, and thereupon an exceeding great army stood up on their feet. He was then told that the house of Israel was to be compared to these dry and helpless bones. They will again be revived from their graves (exile) unto life and be placed in their own land again.

Verses 15-25. He was then told to take one stick and write upon it for Judah and the children of Israel his companions; and on another stick to write, For Joseph the stick of Ephraim and for all the house of Israel, his companions. He was then told to put the sticks together for everybody to see and explain this as a symbol that after Israel is brought together from among the peoples to their own land they will no more be divided into two kingdoms but will be under one leadership—a descendant

of King David. They will be purified of their various contaminations and transgressions—which they could not avoid wherever they happened to live. Then will they order their lives in accordance with God's laws, and the land of their fathers will be theirs forever. An everlasting covenant of peace will God make with them, by which they shall be his people and he their God. His sanctuary He will put among them, so that all the nations will know that God has sanctified them forever.

EZEKIEL XXXVIII

Verses 1-23. The prophet is bidden to direct his attention against Gog of the land of Magog, who is also at the head of Meschech and Tubal. In a fit of perverseness God will lead his perfectly equipped armies, almost despite himself, against the land of Israel—a devastated land to which its people, hitherto scattered among the nations, have just returned to live safely. Under the command of Gog, will also go his allies, with their far-flung and well-equipped armies. Like a cloud that darkens the land so will these armies be. The thought will have entered his mind to attack this quiet people while their land is not in a fortified condition, but with industry and business much developed. The peoples around will realize immediately that Gog's intention will be to seize that business and industry, so highly profitable, for himself. But the peoples will also learn that these tremendous armies will in the end magnify and sanctify God's name, since they will meet with the fate which the prophets predicted in ancient times. In his jealousy and in the fire of his wrath God will cause a great commotion in the land of Israel, amidst which the armies will fight one another.

The special judgment of God will be seen in the fact that besides pestilence and blood there will rain upon them from heaven an overflowing rain with great hailstones, fire and brimstone.

EZEKIEL XXXIX

Verses 1-29. The prophet continues concerning Gog, who as prince is also at the head of Meshech and Tubal.

That perverse idea which instigated him to come up to Israel's mountains was only because there he was to meet with his downfall, together with his farflung armies. It was there that their flesh would become food for the beasts and fowl, while Magog itself as well as all the safely inhabited isles about would go off in fire. This would impress Israel with God's holy name, while the nations too would learn not to profane it. When this day comes it will be plainly recognized. The ammunition and equipment which are left will be used as fuel for seven years, without the need of additional wood. The corpses will be so many that a special squad will be assigned to bury them in the valley of the passengers east of the sea, which will be known as the valley of Hamon-gog. This work of cleansing the land will take seven months; and ordinary travelers will also take part in it. The city near these graves will be known as Hamonah. Verily they will become an intoxicated feast for the beasts and the fowl. At this hour of Gog's punishment all the nations will come to realize that Israel's plight was not due to chance, but that God deliberately concealed Himself from them, because they trespassed against him. But they will be recompensed for the shame that they bore when God brings them back into their own land, with none to re-

main in exile, and with God's mercy and recognition freely shown them.

HOSEA I

Verses 1-9. Hosea, the son of Beeri, prophesied during the reigns of the following kings—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, of Judah, and Jereboam the son of Joash, King of Israel.

Hosea's first prophecy was of an exceedingly striking nature; he was told by God to marry a harlot, who has had illegitimate children. He therefore married one known as Gomer the daughter of Diblaim who bore him a son. His name, according to God's instructions, was to be Jezreel, to signify the rapidly approaching extinction of the house of Jehu (who killed, and succeeded King Ahab, for the sins of idolatry, of which he was later guilty himself.) At Jezreel (the scene of Ahab's murder) Israel's strength will be broken.

She then bore him a daughter, whose name was Lo-ruhamah, meaning that God will cease to have mercy upon Israel. The house of Judah, however, will be saved and not through war.

She then bore him another son, whose name was Lo-ammi, meaning that Israel has ceased to be God's people and His affiliations with them have ended.

HOSEA II

Verses 1-3. The extremely sad note upon which the preceding chapter ended jolted the prophet into a vision of the opposite extreme—for such is the way of prophecy, where deep shade and bright light intermingle.

Israel's numbers shall be as immeasurable as the sand of the sea, and instead of being called Lo-ammi they will be called "The children of the living God." Judah and Israel will be headed by one leader on the great day of Jezreel, when they arise to reenter the land. The brothers will be renamed Ammi and the sisters Ruhumah (see preceding chapter).

Verses 4-5. (Reality grips the prophet again). Let the quarrel with your mother (the people of Israel) be continued, for she is not my wife, neither am I (God) her husband, unless she banishes her whoredoms. I shall otherwise put her back into the wilderness all naked (stripped of ideals), where she may die out of thirst (or lack of them). How shameful of her to claim that her lovers (strange cults) provide her with bread, water, wool, flax, oil, and drink (material comforts). I shall therefore hedge your way with thorns, where you shall not find it (to lead to happiness). Her chase after her lovers (strange cults) to find happiness will prove futile, after which she will stage a comeback to her first husband (God), realizing that she was better off then. How ignorant of her not to have realized that it is I (God) who has given her corn, wine, and oil, and silver and gold, of which they have given to the Baal cult (in mistaken gratitude). I shall therefore take that all away from her, and in the face of her lovers she will be stripped of all decency. I shall shut off the joy of her festivals too, and her prosperity which she attributes to her lovers I shall devastate.

Verses 16-25. I will allure her into the wilderness (seeing herself devoid of spiritual values) and I will speak upon her heart (for she will then be in a receptive mood.) It will be then that I will restore her to her

affluence again and to her youthful hope and gaiety. She will now serve God out of love while all idolatry will never be mentioned again. There will be complete peace and security for her. You will now forever become mine and appreciative of me through your practice of righteousness and justice and your faith in me. (As I will bestow upon you my) loving kindness and mercies, I will then enjoin upon nature to enrich you with an abundance of all crops as you will be called my people and I will be called your God.

HOSEA III

Verses 1-5. The prophet is now commanded again by God to love a maiden who is untrue to her friend, even as Israel is untrue to Him. Accordingly the prophet has bought her off for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer and a half of barley (the silver pieces went to her friend, being half the biblical price for a maiden, and the barley was to be her year's bare subsistence—Malbim). The condition attached was that they should abstain from one another and she too from other men, for a certain period of time. This will mean that Israel (in exile), without legitimate institutions, will also discard the illegitimate ones. But in the end of days they will be seized with a longing for God, His goodness (the Temple), and David their king.

HOSEA IV

Verses 1-14. God's quarrel with Israel is that the land

has been emptied of truth, of kindness, and of the knowledge of God. In its stead came swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery, immoral conduct, and wanton bloodshed. The land will become depressed and all therein will languish, from man to animal. But there is no point in reproving anyone, since the people are in one quarrelsome huddle with the priest (whose teachings they are supposed to follow). As a result they shall fall by day (when the priest is to do his teaching) and along with them shall fall the (false) prophet who sees his visions by night, and so will the mother (that feeds them spiritually) be cut down. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, because the priests chose to reject it by forgetting God's Torah, and so will I too forget your children (that you were supposed to raise spiritually.) As they increase so do their sins, therefore will I change their glory into shame. The people have become like the priest who looks forward to the fruits of sinfulness (in the form of sacrifices). But, being repaid accordingly, this will not satisfy them. Whoredom and wine intoxicate them, and leads them to all sorts of superstitions and idolatry. Therefore their daughters and daughters-in-law ought to be adjudged innocent, if they indulge in the same orgies of adultery as their elders.

Verses 15-19. Now let not Judah become involved in Israel's sins, and may they not come to Gilgal and Bethaven (nests of sin). Israel chose to backslide when the wide spaces of the land was theirs (before they seceded). What unites Ephraim now is idolatry; therefore (Judah) keep away from him (make no effort at reunion). Their leaders indulge in drinking which leads them to adultery, and turns their love into shame. Their worship of idols is the (evil) spirit that pursues them.

HOSEA V

Verses 1-15. The prophet calls upon the priests, the house of Israel, and (especially) the king, to account for putting up sentries at Mizpah and Tabor (to block the people from visiting the Temple in Judah). As a result idol worship has been intensified, while God is in retreat from all of them. Ephraim has been so defiled by his deeds that he cannot hope ever to return to God. This will eventually humble the glory of Ephraim, and Judah (should they affiliate) will fall as well. If ever they make their way to sacrifice at the Temple they will find no response, because their children are strange (to the Jewish way of life). This treacherous act will cause their destruction inside of a month. The prophet warns them to proclaim in all the principal cities of Benjamin that the people stay in their places (not to affiliate with Ephraim). Ephraim's unfortunate fate has been sealed. The officers of Judah (who apparently were anxious to reunite with Ephraim) are warned against arousing God's anger. Ephraim chose to follow the general law (not the Torah law); they will threfore disintegrate, and so will Judah (who is trying to copy). Their looking for help from Assyria will do them no good. None can save them from God's decision to punish them unless, in their dire condition, they recognize their guilt and decide to seek the help of God.

HOSEA VI

Verses 1-15. Unless they will say (Judah and Ephraim) now let us return to God for he had smitten us twice and

preserved us alive and will do so a third time (probably referring to the different exiles). Unless they will make their revival dependent upon their drive to understand God which could positively be done.

(Facing reality again) But what may I now do for Ephraim and Judah when their kindliness is as undurable as the morning dew? My saying which was hammered out by the prophets and on account of which many have died was:- For I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. But taking after Adam they treacherously broke the covenant. Sinful Gilead is polluted with blood. The priests too do their mischief like a band of robbers. It is horrible how Ephraim has defiled himself. To this (defilement) Judah too makes her contribution at a time when I meant her to be my surviving people.

HOSEA VII

Versus 1-7. God's intentions of keeping Ephraim in a healthy condition are continuously frustrated by the people's falseness and their plottings to rob and steal. This may please the king and his officers but it strangles them in so far as God is concerned. They burn with lust like a veritable oven with hardly a let-up. These official wine parties of the State sicken the officers and in their inefficiency they fail to preserve law and order causing thereby the continual downfall of the Kings.

Verses 8-16. Ephraim is becoming carelessly assimilated through the cultures of strange peoples which undermine his strength and youthfulnes and disparage his pride and yet he is quite unaware of it. Like a silly dove Ephraim relied upon Egypt and Assyria and takes no

heed of the warning (by the prophets) that he would be trapped anyway. It is very unfortunate for him that he belies my readiness to redeem him. When he is panicky it is of his stockpiles of corn and wine that he is thinking. And when I reprove him with a view to strengthen him he misconstrues it. The atrocious tongue of his officers like a false arrow boomerangs instead of going up; so are they being scoffed at in Egypt (their false politics react to their own detriment).

HOSEA VIII

Verse 1-14. The prophet is bidden to cry out aloud his warning to the people of the impending catastrophe that is to descend upon them because they transgressed against the covenant and the Torah. By failing to cry out their faith in God Israel has forsaken the absolute good. Their government is without My approval and the gold and silver used for idols will prove their undoing. What with no support from your (worshiped) calf and My wrath incurred, Samaria, when will you ever become clean? From Israel came the craftsman who fashioned that calf, which will eventually be broken into shreds. Their efforts will prove futile, and whatever is accomplished will be swallowed up by strangers. Israel has now become so insignificant that even the peoples have no use for him. Ephraim is so isolated that he must pay well to solicit the love of Assyria. But even under these conditions I would gather them (under my protection) if they would just begin to tremble a bit over the burden of (a strange) government. Ephraim is continuing to build (strange) altars; the principles of My Torah are becoming strange. Their sacrifices are just for eating

purposes, since God does not care for them. When their sins for imitating Egypt are visited upon Israel as well as upon Judah, their palaces and fortified cities will go up in fire.

HOSEA IX

Verses 1-17. Israel may not rejoice as do other peoples, because she was not true to God and like a whore she accepted reward from every other cornfloor (cult). Therefore will her own crop of corn and wine not sustain her. Ephraim will return to Egypt, and at Assyria the people will eat unclean things because the land will not sustain them. At the Temple they shall not carry on with the wine and sacrifice service, because like the mourner's bread it is unclean—and unwanted. How will you do when the festivals come around? Fleeing from destruction, they will find their burial in Egypt together with their treasures. The day of reckoning is coming, and then will Israel learn that it was only because of his multitude of sins and contempts that the prophet was called a fool, a mad man. Ephraim was set against the prophet, and God and he (the prophet) were obstructed at every step, with hatred raging against him even while in the Temple. Their corruption is so profound as in the days of Gibeah —which makes their sins unforgivable. Originally Israel was as wonderful as the grapes that are found in the wilderness but they soon reasserted their attachment to idolatry, which made them contemptible to the extent they had been loved. The prophet curses them vehemently, never to bear live or life-sustaining offspring, because they have been killing them (for the Molech cult). And their evil practices at Gilgal (idolatry) affirmed

their fate to be exiled, since they could not be loved again, for there was none among their leaders not revolting (against God).

HOSEA X

Verses 1-10. While Israel was worthy to be compared to the fruit of the vine he is now but an empty vine, since these fruits represent as many of his (strange) altars. These altars, however, will break down by the very fact that they are now afflicted with a divided heart. This lack of fear of God will convince them finally that their king too is of little use to them. Their spoken words, their pacts to which they swear falsely—all makes justice appear like hemlock in the fields. The people of Samaria who came to the calves of Beth-aven with their worries, and the priests rejoicing, will now fear because of their departed "glory," for they will be carried off to Assyria, and shame will receive Ephraim. As for Samaria's king, he is like foam upon the water. The people will wish that mountains cover their altars, the sin of Israel. They are now as sinful as when in the days of Gibeah and in their war against those perpetrators (in the concubine affair) they have attained nothing. In my desire to punish them, therefore, it will have to be other peoples who will subject them to a hard life.

Verses 11-15. I have reognized in this people a love for accomplishment and so I have ordered for them a life of righteousness and mercy, but after all the plowing and sowing it was a lying fruit that they reaped, all because they trusted in their ability to choose their own way. This caused confusion and ultimate destruction. This premature extinction of the (last) king of Israel came

as a result of their deliberate wickedness, that began at Beth-el (where the sacred calves were first put up).

HOSEA XI

Verses 1-11. When Israel was still young in Egypt I declared my love for them. But the more they were called upon (to cling to God) the more they retreated toward idolatrous practices. And I nursed Ephraim, carried them on my arms but they would not recognize Me as the one Who had healed them (as they matured). I have shown great love for them, eased their burden, and renewed them with vigor. Yet while they would not be turned back to Egypt they fell under the sovereignty of Assyria, because they refused to return (to God). It was due to their own manoeuvering that their cities and institutions were destroyed. And there is a yearning in my people to look up for my response but they could not rise (to the occasion) in their entirety. How therefore can I hand over Ephraim for complete destruction when I was seized with a change of heart toward him. No, I shall not permit My anger to destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man, My holiness must still be among you. Like a lion will God roar out, and astir like a trembling bird will they go after Him, from the west, from Egypt and Assyria, where they will be settled again in their homes.

HOSEA XII

Verses 1-15. I am surrounded with Israel's lies and deceits, while Judah is still imbued with Godliness and is devoted to what is holy. Ephraim is pursuing the wind and is increasing its stock of lies and violence as it makes

a pact with Assyria and carries its oil to Egypt. And God is to quarrel over Judah and recompense Jacob (Ephraim) according to his doings. (The prophet is paraphrasing Jacob's experiences and applying it in a derogatory sense to Ephraim.) Jacob held to his brother's heel and wrestled with and overpowered the angel. (In a similar way Ephraim is trying to overpower Judah.) The angel begged that they be found at Beth-el where matters would be discussed. In a similar way Judah reminds Ephraim that the same God of hosts is yet there. (The prophet turns again to Ephraim.) You must therefore return to your God by observing mercy and justice and turning to him continually. For your claims that you act scrupulously in your prosperous business dealings, when this is not so, God will put you in those historic tents probably alluding to the makeshift tents of Jacob when he fled from Leban). And I sent enough prophets to appeal to you in a picturesque way. So if Gilead meets with misfortune, think of your falseness at Gilgal and the numerous other altars. (How impoverished were Jacob's beginnings.) He fled to Aram where he served for one woman and waited for another. (But how glorious all was afterwards.) Through a prophet God brought Israel out of Egypt and through the prophet he was preserved. (That was because Jacob's intentions were to enhance God's glory.) But Ephraim angered him bitterly, for which he will pay with his blood and with shame.

HOSEA XIII

Verses 1-15. When Ephraim (Jeroboam) spoke harshly (against King Solomon) he gained his ascendancy in Israel, but was doomed to die for his offense of idolatry.

Their sinfulness has now increased by their demanding those who sacrifice to kiss their imitation silver calves (thus intensifying the idol cult). Therefore will their disappearance be swift. And all this after God has taken them out of Egypt and cared for them in the wilderness, demonstrating that there was none besides Him to help them. Of course this forgetfulness came after the rich land satisfied them and made them proud of heart. As if by devouring beasts so have you destroyed yourself, Israel, because you have revolted against Me, against your only help. Where is now the government that you demanded, to help you? It was in My anger that I gave them a king (Saul) and in My wrath that I took him away (last king of Ephraim, Hosea, son of Ela). Ephraim's sins have sealed his fate. In trying times he will prove an unwise son, unable to come through. I could have rescued them all from catastrophe but they shall succumb and I shall not recant. It was he who sowed dissention between brothers (Ephraim broke with Judah); let therefore the east wind come and dry up his fountain of life.

HOSEA XIV

Verse 1. Samaria is cursed to fall by the sword, along with her women and children because they revolted against God.

Verses 2-10. (The prophet concludes with an appeal for repentance to all of Israel.) Let Israel return to God and recognize that he has been harmed by his sins. To do this you need only words instead of sacrifices, in which you plead for complete forgiveness and for which you show thankfulness. Renounce your reliance upon Assyria

(or any foreign power) in case of war and renounce your idol worship, and reassert your faith in Him in Whom the orphan finds mercy. You will then be healed from your confusion and loved freely, for God's anger will cease. You will then blossom like the lily, with roots deep and branches wide and beautiful. You will blossom like the vine in Zion, and as such you will be known. Relinquish your idols, Ephraim, and as I shall respond so shall you become fruitful. Only the wise will understand with insight that the ways of God are right, and that the just (trustful) shall walk in them (with confidence and happiness) and the transgressors (the speculative) shall fall therein.

JOEL I

Verses 1-20. A prophecy to Joel the son of Pethuel. It concerns the great locust plague that came upon the land, one that none could remember anything like it, and of which the story would be told generations hence. Time for the wine drinkers to weep over the devastated vines from which even the bark would be eaten away by the mighty and sharp toothed locust. Time for the priests to mourn the elimination of flour and wine offerings and for the farmers and vinedressers to howl over the crops that would fail. Joy is withered away from the people. Let the priests don sackcloth, call for a fast day, and gather the elders and all the people into the Temple for prayer, for that day of misfortune is near to come. Even before our eyes is everything destroyed and with it all joy and gladness. All the containers of wine and crops are broken and desolate from disuse.

Cattle and beasts stray about for lack of food and drink; as if by a conflagration is everything consumed.

JOEL II

Verses 1-11. Let the trumpet proclaim it in Zion and all the people shall tremble, for that day is near when the mighty locust will like a conflagration turn the land from a Garden of Eden into a desolate wilderness. Like a well mustered and disciplined army of riders and chariots will their din come to frighten the people and blacken each face. Their noise will fill the city and like a thief will they enter the house through the window. The earth will quake, the heavens will darken when that mighty and irresistible throng comes to carry out God's command.

Verses 12-27. But it is time yet to rend your hearts rather than your clothes, and turn to your gracious, merciful, long suffering, and kindly God with all your heart, and with fasting and weeping, so that some blessing may yet be left. Let all gather at the call of the trumpet, from elders and babies to bride and groom, and pray for mercy so that God's people may not be put to shame—that the nations shall ask: Where is their God? And may God's jealousy over his land and pity for his people be aroused to answer our call, so that our wine and crops may be restored, our shame removed, and the locusts be driven off into a barren and desolate land, there to die and rot away. Let the earth not fear any more but rejoice, and let the beasts not fear, for once again is the wilderness covered with grass and the trees produce their fruits in strength. And the children of Zion shall rejoice, for the

rain is coming down again to fill the barns with grain and the pits with wine and oil. You shall be fully restored for the years that the locust has eaten, so that you may eat your bread to satisfaction and praise your God, for you shall never be shamed again.

JOEL III

Verses 1-5. And there will come a time when I shall pour my spirit upon all flesh, so that young and old, men and women, will become visionary, and even servants and maids will be seized with that spirit. And a strange world will it be before God's great and awesome day arrives—a world of blood and fire and pillars of smoke, when the very sun will turn dark and the moon will turn into a ball of blood. And only a remnant to whose call God would respond will remain—such a one will remain in Zion and Jerusalem.

JOEL IV

Verses 1-3. This will come at the time when a remnant will have come to Judah and Jerusalem. All the nations will I gather then down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, where I will put them to trial over their having scattered my people and parted my land and cheaply mistreated the young.

Verses 4-8. Now why and wherefore have you done this. Tyre, Zidon, and all those bordering on Palestine? You have taken my silver and gold and all the treasured things, while the children of Judah you have sold away

to the Greeks. They will be aroused to leave the places that you sold them to, while they will in turn buy off your sons and daughters and sell them to the distant Sabeans.

Verses 9-21. Let war be proclaimed, the armies gathered: let the plows and pruninghooks be converted into swords and spears, and let them all gather into the valley of Jehoshaphat, where I will sit in trial over their wickedness with the result that their multitudes will there be annihilated. And while God roars out from Zion where heaven and earth shall shake, He will become the hope and the strength of his people. Then will you know that God dwells in Zion, that Jerusalem is holy, where strangers shall no more pass through her. In that day there will be an abundance of wine and milk and water a plenty, where even (a newly formed) river will irrigate the valley of Shittim. Egypt and Edom, however, will become desolate places because they have shed the innocent blood of the children of Judah. That blood shall never be forgiven, though Judah will be settled in its land for all time and God shall dwell in Zion.

AMOS I

Verses 1-2. These are the prophecies spoken by Amos, a herdsman from Tokea, during the reign of Uzziah, King of Judah, and Jeroboam, King of Israel. That was two years before the earthquake. He said that God would roar out of Zion and the habitations of the shepherds mourn, and the top of the Carmel wither (probably alluding to the destruction to be caused by the earthquake).

Verses 3-15. Three are the transgressions of Damascus (probably referring to idolatry, bloodshed, and adultery) but it will be the fourth one, that of wanton cruelty toward the Giledites that will break its power, put the palaces of Ben-hadad of the house of Hazael on fire, and exile the Aramite people to Kir.

Three are the transgressions of Gaza (same as above) but it will be the fourth one that of their delivering to Edom (during the second destruction of the Jewish State) anyone who happened to escape—thus making the exile thorough and complete that will destroy the inhabitants of the principal cities of the Philistines and put the walls and palaces of Gaza on fire.

Three are the transgressions of Tyre (same as above) but it will be the fourth one that of their delivering to Edom (during the second destruction of the Jewish State) anyone who happened to escape — thus making the exile thorough and complete and thereby giving no care about the brotehrly pact (once made between King Solomon and their King Hiram) that will put the walls and palaces of Tyre on fire.

Three are the transgressions of Edom (same as above) but it will be the fourth one, that of pursuing his brother (Israel) to kill him mercilessly and in perpetual anger, that will put Teman and the palaces of Bozrah on fire.

Three are the transgressions of the Ammonities (same as above) but it will be the fourth one, that of killing the (Jewish) mothers together with their young when they had a chance to widen their territory by capturing that of the Israelites (that will put the walls of Rabah and its palaces on fire, in a stormy war that will send its king and officers into exile.

AMOS II

Verses 1-16. Three are the transgressions of Moab (same as in preceding chapter) but the fourth one, that of (insulting) the King of Edom by burning his bones in lime, will kill its lawmakers and officers and will put Moab and the palaces of Kirioth on fire, where amidst tumult and confusion Moab shall die.

Three are the transgressions of Judah (same as above) but it will be the fourth one, that of defying God's Torah and refusing to obey its laws and permitting themselves as their fathers before to err by the same lies, that will put Judah and the palaces of Jerusalem on fire.

Three are the transgressions of Israel (same as above) but it will be the fourth one that I shall not condone (latter expression used throughout in text). For money they sell the righteous and the poor for a pair of shoes. Their striving is to subject the poor and to repress the meek and to profane my name; father and son will go to the same (betrothed) maid. And in their idolatrous temples they will comfortably lay themselves upon clothes pawned to them (by the poor) and drink the wine of those they would condemn. Yet it was I who completely destroyed the mighty Amorite before them so that they might inherit his land, after I took them out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness for forty years. Of their sons I made prophets and Torah scholars only that they should thwart them. Therefore will I oppress you in a way that the swiftest and strongest among you will be hemmed in without any means of escape.

AMOS III

Verses 1-8. The prophet bids Israel appreciate the fact that ever since God has taken them out of Egypt He has become intimately affiliated with them and cannot therefore rescind their iniquities. His association with them is as inseparable and self-evident as when two people set out for a walk implying that such must surely have been their mutual agreement. Similarly would the lion's roar imply that he had captured his prey, or that the snare was put up to make the catch. Also that the sudden call of the trumpet would alert the people (to possible danger). Trouble therefore in a city would equally imply God's causing it. (The first three examples respectively probably imply peaceful occurrences, inevitable occurrences, and deliberate acts, to all of which God gives close consideration.) God's association is especially great in case of the prophet, since God would do nothing before revealing it to the prophet; nor would the prophet abstain from prophesying even as one would hardly be unafraid of the lion's roar.

Verses 9-15. And the confusion and oppression in Samaria is so great that even strange peoples such as Ashdod and Egypt can see it from afar. This therefore will bring on the encirclement of the land by the enemy and the consequent loss of its power and the pillage of its palaces. Except for the very sick (whom the enemy could well afford to disregard) few would then be saved. This ominous day would very well see the destruction of the altars at Beth-el, the luxurious winter and summer homes, the ivory houses, and all the rest of them.

AMOS IV

Verses 1-13. The women of Samaria, whom the prophet terms the cows of Bashan, in their quest for a luxurious life, force their masters to oppress the poor and crush the needy in order to provide for them. But God has sworn by His holiness that the days are coming when you will be carried off in small boats and the last of you in (miserly) fisher boats (because of the enemies' growing disregard for them). And any woman that will break through (the siege) will be stripped of her ornamentations. The prophet is deriding them ironically for their false imitations of the Temple services at Beth-el and Gilgal (centers of idolatrous services). And under the constant refrain—And still have you not returned to Me—he lists the various punishments they were receiving. These are: a scarcity in all the cities of all commodities, a significant lack of rain in one place and too much in another, with the result that three cities will crowd into the one where water is found, with scarcely enough for everybody, and destruction of the crops whether by the elements or insects. They were also inflicted with plagues and with the sword that killed the best of them, and some were as completely destroyed as Sodom and Gamorrah, with only a few who escaped. (All these punishments apparently were experienced by the people on a small scale, but were exaggerated by the prophet, since they could and would happen in such manner) if the people should fail to come forward toward God. For is not God the creator of the mountains, the wind, and knows each thought of man, puts morning light into

darkness again, and treads upon the high places of the earth?

AMOS V

Verses 1-13. The prophet raises a lamentation over Israel's decisive and permanent collapse, where out of a group of thousand only a hundred would remain and ten out of a hundred. However, they are being warned in advance that in order to live they must seek after God rather than maintain their idolatrous centers at Beth-el and Gilgal, since that would kindle the fire to consume the House of Joseph. Instead of contemplating the powers of God, the Creator of the various stars, of the sequences of day and night, of the wonders of turning the waters of the sea into rain, of the phenomenon whereby the defrauded overpowers the strong when the latter's strongholds are destroyed instead, they frown upon justice and righteousness, they hate the one who criticizes them publicly and abhor the one who speaks uprightly. This treading down of the poor, therefore, whereby you take his grain away from him, will not let you enjoy your hewn houses and lovely wine, for I know that mighty and manifold are your sins wherein you persecute the just, take bribes, and deny justice to the poor. The prudent in these evil times would therefore be silent (when retribution comes).

Verses 14-27. Again, seek the good and not the evil, so that you may live. Despise the evil and love the good and reestablish justice in the courts, and then perhaps will God be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph. It is therefore that the streets will be filled with a wailing and the farmer and the vintners shall mourn. Woe to

those who view ironically God's day, for it will be a day of darkness and not of light, when one will be scarcely out of one trouble only to fall into another. How I hate and despise your holidays, your assemblies, your many and fat offerings; remove from me the noise of your songs, and the melodies of your viols I will not hear. Better, let justice roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream. It was not offerings that I required of you during the forty years that you were in the wilderness but now together with the many idols of yours will I drive you out, away beyond Damascus.

AMOS VI

Verses 1-11. The prophet regrets the serenity and calm of the people of Zion and Samaria, who were really outstanding among the nations but preferred to imitate them. He calls upon them to study these nations and see for themselves if they have prospered more than they did, spiritually or territorially. They are actually moving to the day when they will have to settle amidst violence (when in exile among these nations). Now they lie outstretched upon their ivory beds eating the choicest of meats, drinking wine to the accompaniment of music on instruments which they invented like David, and messaging themselves with the finest ointments; and little do they grieve over the afflictions of Joseph (Israel). But now will they plunge headlong into exile and away with their overstuffed parties. God swears by Himself that He now abhors the excellency of Jacob with the result that whole cities will be handed over to the enemy where all will die, fearing even to mention God's name (lest they be detected by the enemy). It will be God's order

that all houses where people are, whether large or small, be crashed (by the enemy).

Verses 12-14. Even as it is possible to run horses upon a rocky field or to plow there with oxen, so is it possible to live without justice or the fruits of righteousness. Then why be happy over what matters not and claim to be strong because you have taken matters into your own hands? Behold I will raise up a people against you that will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath (north) to the sea of the wilderness (south).

AMOS VII

Verses 1-9. In a vision the prophet saw that a herd of grasshoppers were bound to invade the fields late in the season. He was alarmed over the dire results to follow and therefore pleaded to God in behalf of weakened Jacob (Israel). His plea was heeded when God promised him that this would not happen. In a similar plea he also averted a catastrophic fire that was to consume the fields. He then saw a plumbline in the hand of God measuring the accuracy of a wall. When upon questioning he affirmed his vision to God he was then assured by God that from now on Israel's sins would no more be overlooked but would be accurately evaluated, with the results that Israel's altars and sanctuaries would become desolate and the House of Jeroboam would be destroyed by the sword.

Verses 10-17. It was then that Amaziah, priest of Bethel, sent word to Jeroboam to the effect that Amos had conspired against him, since his prophecies of the former's ultimate fate and the eventual exile of Israel had greatly aroused the people. Amaziah then ordered Amos

to flee to Judah, where his prophecies would earn him a living, and that he must immediately cease to prophesy in this royal residential city of Beth-el. Amos' reply was that he was not a prophet by profession but rather a herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit, but that he prophesied upon special command of God. However, this effrontery of Amaziah angered the prophet into telling him what his ultimate fate would be, that his wife would become a harlot, his children be slain, his land divided up, with himself dying in a polluted land, while Israel would be driven off his land to go into captivity.

AMOS VIII

Verses 1-14. In his vision the prophet saw a basket of summer fruit. This meant that Israel's end was imminent, according to God's interpretation, after the prophet affirmed his vision to him. (A play on the words "summer fruit" and "end," which are similar in Hebrew.) The palace songs will then turn into howls as the quietude of the corpses fill all places.

These are bidden to listen: they who are ready to engulf the poor entirely. They lay their designs to become effective after the harvest month shall pass (in that month the poor do their pickings in the fields freely) or when the year of release comes around (when they may not sow their small fields). Then will they raise the price of grain and reduce the measure or manipulate the weights; then will they obtain labor cheaply and sell the poorest grain profitably. God therefore swears by the excellency of Jacob that He shall ever forget these deeds. Shall not the earth tremble over this? Shall not everybody mourn it? Would that they be flooded even as the Nile performs

in Egypt. It will be a dark day for them when their festivals turn into mourning, their songs into lamentations, with sackcloth upon them all. God's word for which they will then grow hungry will cease. A fainting thirst shall seize the pretty maidens and the young men who swore by the sin of Samaria and the idols of Dan, never to recover again.

AMOS IX

Verses 1-6. In his vision the prophet saw God standing upon the altar. As a sign that dissension would at first set in among the people which would prepare them for ultimate annihilation he commanded the prophet to smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake. Then the assurance came that regardless of where they might hide themselves, whether it be down below or up in the heavens, whether it be on top of the Carmel or in the depth of the sea they would be searched out and destroyed. God's intent upon doing away with them would pursue them even as they would go into captivity before the enemy. For such are the powers of God that were He to touch the earth it would melt, where all would mourn as the flood would cover them like the Nile in Egypt, who builds his stories in the heavens and his unified scheme operates upon the earth, who calls upon the waters of the sea to turn into rain.

Verses 7-14. Israel has now become unto me not unlike the Ethiopians and as for the fact that I have taken them out of Egypt so have I freed other peoples too. It is my intent to destroy this sinful kingdom even if not all of the people. It will be done carefully and thoroughly so that none who have denied the possibility of eventual

punishment would escape. Then will I resurrect the fallen tabernacle of David and rebuild it as of old. It will be they who will then take possession of the remnants of Edom and the other peoples. When I shall return the captivity of my people to rebuild the waste cities and to replant the vineyards their abundance in crops, in wine, in fruits shall be great and their security in the land shall never fail.

OBADIAH I

Verses 1-21. This is the vision of Obadiah. The nations have allied themselves to make war upon Edom, is what the prophet has heard from God. A backward and unrespected people is Edom and yet so confident in its strength, but that will all be to no avail. Esau is being exposed and stripped worse than were robbers to descend upon him and with little opposition on his part. He has even failed to understand that his confederates and friends were preparing to leave him treacherously at the border. In that day Edom's wise men will perish and his mighty men will be dismayed, so that this slaughter may be the more complete. Shame shall cover you for your violence against your brother Jacob. You have acted no better than his enemies on the day of his defeat. You should not have looked on and rejoiced on the day of Judah's destruction; you should not have participated in looting him on the day of his calamity; neither should you have stood on the crossway to kill those who escaped or to deliver up those who remained in that day of distress. Among other peoples you will therefore have to pay in kind for what you have done by drinking that cup that will undo you entirely. But upon Mount Zion there will

be deliverance and holiness when the House of Jacob will come back into its possession. Then will the House of Jacob be as a fire and the House of Esau as straw to be burned completely. The host of the captivity that will come back from all the lands will then take possession of the cities of the Nagev, the Plain, the fields of Ephraim and Samaria and Gilead (in the Transjordan). On Mount Zion will Esau be judged by the saviours of the people and the kingdom shall then belong to God.

JONAH I

Verses 1-16. God commanded Jonah the son of Amittai to go and address the people of Nineveh, capital city of Assyria, and warn them of the dire consequences about to follow their wicked behavior. Jonah (for some reason) refused to realize his mission and instead paid his fare on a ship at Jaffa and fled to Tarshish. On the way, there developed a mighty tempest in the sea and the ship was about to break. The mariners were seized with fear; in order to lighten the ship to speed its movement, they threw some of the wares into the sea, while Jonah went to one of its corners and fell fast asleep. The shipmaster woke him up, so that he too might call upon his God for possible help. They then decided to cast lots to ascertain the particular person who might be responsible for this trouble. The lot fell upon Jonah. In answer to their questioning regarding the nature of his work, and from what land and people he came, he told them that he was a Hebrew and it was the God of the heavens, Who had created the sea and the dryland, that he feared. The people were seized with great fear, because from what he told them they understood that he was fleeing from

before God. Upon their question as to what should be done now his advice was that they throw him into the sea since he was quite sure he was the cause of the tempest. Nevertheless the people made a last attempt to row the ship to land but were frustrated by the continuous storm. After again pleading to God that they may not be punished for sending an innocent man to death, since this seemed to be His will, they threw Jonah into the sea whereupon the raging sea quieted. In great fear of God now they offered a sacrifice to Him and made vows to become Jews or to give to charity.

JONAH II

Verses 1-11. It was then that God prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and therein he remained for three days and three nights. Out of the belly of this fish Jonah prayed to God as follows: I cried to God in my distress, and I seem to have been answered, though I am still in the deep of the sea with all its billows and waves passing over me. I thought that I was all gone but it seems that I will yet again look up to your holy Temple, though I am now encompassed by the waters of the depth with the weeds round about my head. By going down to the bottom of the sea mountains, I thought that the earth was barred before me forever, but I seem to be going up from that grave because, in my descent I remembered God and He accepted my prayer. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy while I will pay my vows to God with thankfulness for His salvation. God spoke to the fish, and he vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

JONAH III

Verses 1-9. God then called upon Jonah a second time to go to Nineveh the capital city and make the same pronouncement (see chap. 1.) Accordingly he went to Nineveh, a great city of three day journey. When he was one day's journey inside the city he cried out, saying that in another forty days Nineveh would be overthrown. The people believed God; and so all, from great to small, put on sackcloth, after proclaiming a fast. When the news reached the king he too arose from his throne, took off his robe, put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes. He then issued a proclamation in his name and in the name of the government, that neither man nor beast should eat or drink anything. Then the people cried mightily unto God and promised they would repent and would return anything that they might have taken by violence, hoping that God too would recant from his anger so they might not perish. And so it was.

JONAH IV

Verses 1-11. This displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. (He might have feared possible misinterpretation of his mission and this too might have been the reason for his original refusal to obey). He then prayed to God, saying that he had fled to Tarshish from the beginning because he knew God to be gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and would repent of the evil. He then pleaded that he die as he would prefer it to living. At this anger of Jonah God expressed surprise. Jonah left the city and settled in the

east of it under a shady booth which he had made for himself, and waited to see what would happen inside the city. God also prepared a gourd for Jonah to provide him with more shade, which made him very happy. But in the morning a worm came and smote the gourd until it withered. As the sun arose a vehement east wind began to blow, and with the sun beating down upon his head he was seized with a fainting spell which made him plead for death, as it would be better for him, he said, than to live. And when Jonah affirmed God's inquiry whether he was angry over the gourd God said; You are sorry over the gourd for which you have not labored to make it grow and which lasted only overnight. Shall I not be sorry for the great city of Nineveh, with its over sixscore thousands of people, among them such that know not between their right and left, besides so much cattle?

MICAH I

Verses 1-16. Micah the Morashite prophesied during the reign of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; his prophecies concern Samaria and Jerusalem.

He calls upon all the peoples to listen, in fact he addresses himself to the entire world and all therein and names God as a witness that he has done so. He warns that due to the transgressions of Israel, whose capitals Samaria and Jerusalem have become the centers of idolatry, God will come out of His place and will tread upon the high places of the earth, so that the mountains will melt like wax against the fire and the valleys will crack as by a swift downward stream (complete destruction). Samaria shall fall apart to resemble a heap of the field, and all its idols will be burned and demolished as befits

the hire of a harlot. Over this incurable wound which has reached Judah even up to the gates of Jerusalem, the prophet says that he will go stripped and naked and call for mourning and wailing like those of dragons and owls. But none may even cry lest they learn of it in Gath (of the Philistines); just roll yourself in dust inside Aphrah. Move on, you inhabitants of Shaphir, with your shame naked. The inhabitants of Zaanan need not participate in the mourning of Beth-ezel, since they too would be deprived of their wealth. The people of Maroth have hoped for good but how can they any longer now that the evil has reached even to the gates of Jerusalem? Time for you people of Lachish to harness your chariot to the swift beast, since among you were the originators of Zion's sins. The houses of Achzib which you gave as a present to the kings of Israel in place of Moresheth-gath will also have to be abandoned. There comes your conqueror, Marashah; he is coming even unto Adullam, the glory of Israel. Cut your hair down and make yourself bald, like the eagle, over your delicate children, for they are gone from you, into captivity. (The words that express mourning resemble the names of the various places, since they were intended as a play on words).

MICAH II

Verses 1-5. Woe to those who when on their beds devise iniquity and perpetrate evil only to implement it in the morning, since it is in their power to do so. Should they desire fields or houses they just take them away, and thus rob the man together with his possessions. Therefore will I plot evil against this family from which they shall not shake loose, and they shall not walk haught-

ily in these hard times. In that day you will serve as an example and as a lamentation for the eulogizer who would say: We were utterly pillaged, with the portion of my people transferred (to others), our fields divided so that no attempt could be made to have them returned. There will therefore be none to cast a cord by lot (to parcel a field) in God's congregation.

Verses 6-13. Better not prophesy to them who would not have it, and avoid being shamed. It is spoken in the house of Jacob that perchance God's spirit is stifled if such were His doings, since it is obvious that God's word does good to him who walks uprightly. And when My people put up My word as an enemy against them it is because they disrobe those who would securely pass by, to appear as if they had returned from war. They would dislodge the women of My people from their pleasant homes, and from their children they would take away My glory forever. Time for you to leave, for this restful place ought not be yours since you have strongly conspired to pollute it. Now were one crazily and falsely to preach to you to indulge in strong wines, or were he to preach to you that you surely would be gathered together as the flock in the midst of their fold, the place would be teeming with people. Should the destroyer (of values) lead them, they would follow him past the gate, putting even their king and God Himself at the head of the procession.

MICAH III

Verses 1-12. The prophet confronts the heads and dignitaries of Israel with the question, is it not their concern to know the meaning of justice? Here is what

goes on. The good they hate while the evil they love; they pluck the skin off their fellowmen and the flesh off their bones. They actually devour my people, skin and flesh, and crush their bones as when meat is put in a caldron. Then shall they cry to God, but shall receive no response, and He shall disregard them much as used to be their evil practice. And as for the false prophets who lead My people astray by assuring peace to him who would feed them and war to him who would not, darkness shall descend upon them by day instead of visions by night. Shame and sadness shall be their lot, for God's answer was not in their mouth.

However, I was filled with strength through God's spirit and with justice and daring to declare to Jacob his transgressions and to Israel his sins. Listen therefore, you, the heads and dignitaries of Israel, who despise justice and frown upon fairness, who built Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity, who sell justice, education, and prophecy for money, and have yet the effrontery to assert that God's presence is among you—which will protect you from all harm—it is because of you that Zion will be plowed up like a field, and Jerusalem turned into heaps and the mount of the Temple will become a forest.

MICAH IV

Verses 1-8. But in the last days the Temple mountain will be re-established at the head of all the mountains and will become more exalted than they, and to this peoples shall flow. And the nations shall go there with one resolve, to learn at God's Temple some of His ways and act accordingly, for the law shall then come forth from Zion and the word of God from Jerusalem. Many and

mighty nations will come there for legal decisions and for purposes of arbitration, regardless of distance, to the end that they beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks; no nation shall raise its sword against another and there shall be no need to learn the art of war. Then shall each one sit unafraid under his vine and fig tree. For each nation shall then walk in the name of its God and we shall walk in the name of our God for ever and ever. In that day will I heal the infirm, the lonely, and the afflicted, and I shall mold a strong nation out of them to rule over them for ever and ever. They shall come to that stronghold Zion, where they will establish their first government, later to become the government of Jerusalem.

Verses 9-14. But wherefore your shouting now as if you had no king or counsellors? You will have to leave the city for Babylonia, where you shall be saved and eventually redeemed from the hands of your enemies. And now when many peoples gather about you to pronounce you guilty and ready to take care of Zion, it will be in total ignorance of God's intentions on their part, for then will their complete destruction come about through the crushing strength of Zion. Into shreds will now be torn the besieged legions who insulted Israel's leaders (smiting with a rod on the cheek denotes insult).

MICAH V

Verses 1-14. You who hail from Bethlehem Ephrathah, were supposed to be of lesser importance among the thousands of Judah, yet will the ruler of Israel stem from you, for there was his origin from the beginning of the time. And so until the rebirth and unity of Israel

comes they will be set wherever they might be; but then will he arise and in the majesty of God's name, which will reach to the ends of the world, will he lead them unto a settled life. This will spell real peace for the land of Assyria; and the land of Nimrod (signifying possible enemies) will be kept at the entrance (of their lands) by threat of the sword and (the diplomacy) of seven top leaders and eight more principal men, making the border of our land safe. This will make the remnant of Jacob among the nations independent of the help of man, even as is the dew from God or the showers upon the grass. He will be as unafraid and as unchallenged as the lion among the beasts of the forest or even as amidst flocks of sheep. To raise his hand over his enemies will mean to cut them off. Then will I do away with your horses and chariots, with your fortifications of the cities, with your soothsayings and various idols, for with anger and fury will I execute vengeance upon the peoples that will be unheard of.

MICAH VI

Verses 1-8 God bids the prophet commence a controversy and an argumentative discussion with the representatives of his people, Israel, whom he terms as the mountains or the strong foundations of the land. The prophet bids the people in the name of God to testify against Him on the nature of His actions toward them or in what way He has burdened them. The record on the positive side shows that He has taken them out of Egypt and freed them from the house of bondage through such leaders as Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. On the negative side, He saved them from the conspiracy which Balak,

King of Moab, and Bilaam, son of Beor, schemed against them at Shittim to stop their march toward Gilgal (their objective in Western Palestine). And all this was to have them know the righteousness of God. And yet in gratitude for it God did not ask for thousands of offerings, whether animals or offspring, or for rivers of oil; but all He asked of you, man, is that you do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.

Verses 9-16. The prophet warns them to heed God's voice in the city, as it is calling up the rod against them. For are not yet the houses of the wicked filled with the treasures of wickedness, scant measures, deceitful weights and scales, the rich full of violence and the people speaking lies, and deceit on their tongues? Can I possibly declare them innocent under such conditions? For these sins the blows you get will sicken you, for you shall eat and not be satisfied, since your insides will become spoiled and whatever you might save will come back to the enemy: your crops you shall not harvest and your wines and oils you shall not enjoy. It is the statutes of Omri and the works of the house of Ahab that you still cling to, that will burden you with shame and desolation.

MICAH VII

Verses 1-7. The prophet is overwhelmed with remorse over the fact that the good and upright men are disappearing with himself as the last of the summer fruit or the poorest and last remaining grapes of the vintage. The situation now is such that each one seeks to improve upon his evil manipulations. The officer actually asks for a bribe, the judge expects to be paid, and the chief executive confirms the individual's infractions, so that

among the three of them the entanglement is set. Moreover, all the people are lurking about one another, each one setting a trap for his fellow. The very best of them is as a brier, with the result that the day of their greatest expectations will first turn into confusion. One can have no faith in a friend or trust an educator, one must even guard against his own wife; a son will disrespect his father, a daughter will defy her mother, daughter-in-law her mother-in-law; in fact the people of his own household will turn out to be his enemies.

Verses 8-13. The prophet sees his only hope in God, that He will not remain heedless, that He will not permit his enemies to rejoice over him; that his defeat be temporary, for God is the light that will dispel his darkness. He will bear patiently God's indignation in retaliation for his sins, since he is bound afterwards to see the light, for such is his confidence in God's righteousness. And when my enemy confronts me with the question, Where is your God?, or declares, Your rehabilitation is indefinitely postponed, I feel sure that yet will I see her prostrated and covered with shame. Yet will I see her land, as a result of her doings, desolate, from Assyria and the fortified cities unto the river, and from sea to sea and mountain to mountain.

Verses 14-20. May You shepherd the isolated flock of Your heritage, who make the forest into a Carmel (by their exemplary life in the diaspora); may they be shepherded in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old. (The voice of Providence answers.) As in the days of the Exodus from Egypt will I show wonders unto you, so that the nations will be ashamed and astounded upon beholding your strength and like the snake in the ground will they tremble in their strongholds from fear of God.

(The prophet responds in gratitude.) There is none like You, God, to forego the sins of the remnant of His heritage, for You will not retain Your anger for ever since it is in mercy that You delight. Again will You have mercy upon us and fulfill the truth that You have sworn to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham in the days of old.

NAHUM I

Verses 1-10. This book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite concerns Nineveh. Exceedingly jealous and revengeful is God toward his adversaries; He reserves for them his wrath and fury. Though God be slow of anger and great of power, yet will He not acquit the wicked in His whirlwind speed and rising clouds of dust. None can withstand His indignation, for at His rebuke the sea and rivers dry up; Bashan, Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon wither away; the mountains quake and the hills melt; and as if by a conflagration is the world and all that dwells therein swept away from before Him. His fury pours down like a fire and the rocks are smashed by Him. But God is good as a stronghold in times of trouble, for He accepts those who trust in Him. Whatever you think of God He is determined, once and for all, to put an end to His enemies, as if pursued by darkness, and to their place as if by an overrunning flood. Like fully dried straw are they devoured by fire, though they be tangled like thorns and drunk (with hilarity).

Verses 11-14. From you (Nineveh) has come forth the one who thought evil of God, a wicked counsellor. Therefore, though you be entirely fit and numerous, you will be cut down and gone, with no need to have your affliction repeated. Now will his yoke be broken off you

(Judah) and his bonds torn assunder. And by decree of God will your name never come up again from the grave, in which you together with your gods will be put because you have been vile.

NAHUM II

Verses 1-14. Upon the mountains is the harbinger of peace; therefore may you celebrate Judah and perform your vows; for the wicked one being entirely cut off, shall never pass across you again. The road is clear, for your disperser has himself been put in custody, therefore is your strength reassured. God has restored the excellency of Jacob to its original position, since His enemy was emptied of his strength.

The brave, uniformed, and well-protected army, with its chariots equipped with flaming torches and poisoned arrows, is bounding and raging in the streets with lightning speed. But the esteemed warriors of the defense will be remembered by their stumbling retreat toward the wall for quick protection. The palace household is disheatened as the gates at the river are opened. And Huzzab (the queen) is carried off to exile accompanied by her maids, who are growling like the doves. Nineveh, which hitherto was as complacent as a pool of water, is now fleeing, paying no attention to the order that they stop. She is despoiled of her gold and silver and the glory of her lovely vessels and endless treasures. Thus is she emptied and disheartened, trembling in her whole body with face becoming blacker and blacker. Whatever has become of the lion's den whose lions have gathered in their prey for themselves and their young unchallenged? It was God's will that its chariots go off in fire, its lions

together with their prey be consumed by the sword, and its envoys stilled.

NAHUM III

Verses 1-19. Woe to the bloody city that is filled with lies, robbery, and unceasing prey, with the noise of the whip, the rattling wheel, the prancing horses, and the jumping chariot, the galloping horseman with the bright sword, and the glittering spear spreading endless corpses about even as to stumble over them. Even as the gracious and charming harlot so was she able to dominate peoples. But now is God determined to uncover your nakedness and expose your shame. You will become vile under the abominable filth that will be thrown at you. Without any consolation or anyone to bemoan your fate you will yet be bypassed by all who would behold you, desolate Nineveh! You need not fare better than the populated No-amon, which was fortified by the surrounding rivers and the sea, assisted by Ethiopia and the inexhaustible people of Egypt and Put and Lubim. Yet was she carried away into captivitiy with her young children dashed in pieces, her honorable men distributed by lots, and her great bound in chains. So will you now in a confused manner disappear, and remain unaided. Your fortifications shall fall like a ripe fruit when slightly shaken. Your gates have opened to the enemy as if your people were all women. May you be prepared with drinking water and with clay and bricks to repair your forts, yet will the fire and sword consume you like the locust. As numerous as the stars in heaven were your merchants, so were your dukes and counts, and now they are all gone, even as the grasshoppers on a cold day, disperse immediately as the sun begins

to rise. It is as if your leaders and mighty men, O King of Assyria, have taken slumber and your people calmly spread over the mountains. But none shall regret your misfortune; rather should everyone clap his hands for joy, for upon whom did not your wickedness pass continually?

HABAKKUK I

Verses 1-17. This is the prophecy which Habakkuk the prophet saw. For how long shall I cry out to you of violence and still you will not help? Why am I confronted with all sorts of violent wrongdoing, that cause strife and constant dispute? Therefore is the Torah weakened and justice is never carried out; or it is the wrong justice, because the wicked is in control of the righteous.

Take, for instance, the Chaldeans of our day, a bitter and hasty people whose extended exploits in conquering strange possessions are astonishing and unheard of among peoples. They are terrible, since they have declared themselves the sole masters of justice and authority. With horses as swift and fierce as beasts their riders fly great distances, eagle-like, for the one purpose of committing violence and gathering in booty. They scoff at kings and counts, and likewise at all strongholds, which they easily capture. They are then seized with an offending spirit to impute this strength of theirs to their god. Now it is without fear of death at their hands that I ask of you, my holy God from everlasting, how can You, who are of purer sight and unable to bear iniquity, how can You look in quietly as the treacherous and the wicked devour the more righteous, and, to their utter rejoicing, capture men as fishes are captured in a net? These nets

are then their gods, to which they offer sacrifices, attributing their good fortunes to them. Should they be permitted to empty their nets, so that they may kill peoples continually and unmercifully?

HABAKKUK II

Verses 1-11. The prophet declares that he stood watch in the hope that God would offer to solve his provoking problem (see preceding chapter). The answer came and the prophet was advised to write down the prophetic words clearly so that they made fluent reading. He was told that there was a definite time limit; even though it might sometimes be late in coming, yet not excessively (meaning that things eventually catch up with the unscrupulous individual). The arrogant is of unrighteous soul, but it is the righeous that will live on by his faith (that living right brings abiding happiness while the success of wrongdoing is only a mirage). The proud individual is treacherously intoxicated and uneasy in his comfortable home. The wealth of nations would not satisfy his hellish soul, which is as incorrigible as death itself. Eventually he will become the object of scorn to everybody; he will be condemned for amassing wealth that does not belong to him and which can only prove to be an insurmountable burden. His pursuers shall suddenly awake and disrupt him. As you have uprooted many nations through violence and human blood so will you be uprooted by the rest of them together with the metropolis and the people in it (nations fare not better than individuals). Woe to him who thinks that unscrupulous money-making would make him comfortable and important and would save him from hands bound to

harm him. You have planned shame for your household and have implicated yourself if your idea is to undermine many peoples. The (robbed) stone will cry out from the wall and the beam of the (robbed) timber will respond accordingly.

Verses 12-20. Woe to those who build cities through blood and iniquity. It is God's decree that such nations shall toil for the fire and tire in vain. The world will have to learn to understand God's glory even as extensively as the waters cover the sea. Woe to him who derisively intrigues against his friend, so that his weaknesses may be exposed. It will only dull you with shame instead of glory. May the terror of Lebanon and its fierce beasts break you with the metropolis and its people, because of the violence and human bloodshed. Your false and lifeless images will not teach you the way out: woe to him who is trying to arouse wood and stone. In attentive silence must the world stand before God in His holy Temple.

HABAKKUK III

Verses 1-19. A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk, of overwhelming song. The prophet is startled by God's answer (see preceding chapter) and pleads with Him that His actions in the course of the years should be filled with life and concern, so that in His anger He may remember mercy.

(A descriptive panorama of God's actions past and future follows, showing that God is really in command of events). It was from Teman and Mount Paran that God, the Holy One came. His glory covered the heavens

and the earth was full of His praise. And like His brightness so was the radiance of His hands, and there was the mysteriousness of His power. Before Him was the pestilence, burning coals went forth from His feet. He stood and divided up the land, saw fit to disperse the nations, crumbled the eternal mountains, put low the perpetual hills—under His control are the world's currents. Under distress were the tents of Cushan and so were the curtains of Midian trembling. The rivers and the seas were aghast over God's anger, as He was riding His horses, His chariots of salvation. His bow was ablaze, in accordance with the oath He spoke to the tribes; the rivers broke through the ground. The mountains trembled upon sighting You as the streams of water passed over. The deep uttered its voice, His uplifted hand was on high. The sun and the moon stopped in their orbits; they proceeded at the brightness of Your arrows, the sparkle of your spear. With indignation you strode across the earth, with fury You threashed the peoples. You came forth in aid of Your people, of Your anointed; You smashed the head of the house of the wicked, You destroyed its foundation to the end. With his staves You have broken through the head of his armies who stormed to scatter me with joy as when the poor is secretly consumed. You have trodden with Your horses through the heaps of the waters of the sea.

I was all atremble when I heard that a day of trouble was there for an organized people that had come up to find rest. The fruits and crops shall not blossom or produce, neither shall there be flock nor herd in the stalls. But I shall rejoice in God, Who is sure to help. I will yet tread on high places with God's strength. Let the player play on his instrument.

ZEPHANIAH I

Verses 1-18. This is the word of God that came to Zephaniah, in the days of Josiah, son of Amon King of Judah.

The prophet foretells that everything in Judah and Jerusalem will perish, from men to fowl, together with all the contraptions of the wicked and the remnant of Baal with its priests, and all those who worship the solar bodies or the king, and in general those who fail to seek God. He calls for attention because the day of the slaughter has already been decided on and those who are to carry it out have already been summoned. Included in the slaughter will be the officers, the king's children and the elite generally, along with those lackeys who are busy filling their master's homes with violence and deceit. In that day a panicky noise will come up from all the crowded squares because all the merchants and moneybags will be cut down. In that day a careful search will be instituted upon all those settled on their lees, who think that God does neither good nor bad. Their wealth, houses, and vineyards will be trampled and of no benefit to them. That day is very near when the brave man will shout bitterly, a day of wrath, of trouble, desolation, and darkness, a day when the trumpet and alarm will be sounded against the fenced cities and high towers. Man will stumble like the blind, so not even their gold and silver can help them in the day of destruction.

ZEPHANIAH II

Verses 1-3. The prophet appeals to the unwanted

people that they collect themselves for self-analysis, before the decree is issued, in a day that is quick in passing, before God's anger comes down upon them. He appeals to all those people who have acted in accordance with God's law that they now seek righteousness and humbleness; perhaps will they be spared in the day of God's anger.

Verses 4-15. That day will also include Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and the land of the Philistines on the sea coast. It will all be reduced to destruction, except that the returned remnant of Judah will take possession of the coast line.

A similar fate shall overtake Moab and Ammon, who in their pride have gathered at their border to scoff and scorn at God's people; a remnant of the latter shall inherit their spoils. Everyone shall bow down to God, even the peoples on the isles, as the gods of their lands shall fade in the wake of God's terror. Also Ethiopia, and Assyria in the north with its capital Nineveh, shall turn into a desolate desert, where the wild birds shall nest in the lintels of their ruined houses. Especially that joyful city that felt so safe and thought she was alone, there were none beside her—how she was reduced to desolation, a place of beasts, at which every one that passed by would hiss and wag his hand.

ZEPHANIAH III

Verses 1-13. Woe to that thoughtless city (Jerusalem) which became polluted because she would not heed the voice of correction, to rely upon her God and draw nearer Him. Her officers are like roaring lions and her

judges like hungry wolves, who would leave nothing for the next day. Her (false) prophets are simple minded and treacherous people; her priests defile that which is holy; they remove the Torah (from the people). The one among them who is just and does no wrong is God; on the contrary, His judgment is clear and unfailing, but the unscrupulous know no shame. I have completely devastated peoples and thought that now they would fear Me and learn a lesson so that their home could be spared, but they have continued diligently in their misdeeds. Therefore will you have to wait for the day of My convention when the nations will be gathered for the (final) outpouring of My indignation and the earth consumed with the fire of My jealousy. Then will the nations understand clearly that they must together call upon God and worship Him; then will even the remotest and most unaffected peoples offer their gratitude to God. And then will you no more suffer shame for your misdeeds, for you shall lose for all time your joyful pride. What will be left of you will be a humble people that will do no wrong, speak no lies, and harbor no deceitful tongue in their mouths.

Verses 14-20. Sing and rejoice, Zion and Israel, for you shall no more be punished, as your enemies have been stamped out, and with God as your King you shall not see evil again. In that day it will be spoken in Jerusalem that Zion shall not fear or be discouraged, for God is there to help them, love them, and rejoice over them, as He gathers those of you whose hopes for better times have dimmed and yet bore the shame for it anyway. I will then undo your tormentors, help back the infirm, gather those thrust away, and get them praise and fame in all the lands where they have been put to shame. You

shall be a name and a praise among the nations when you are gathered again to live a life of tranquility.

HAGGAI I

Verses 1-15. It was in the second year of the reign of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, that the word of God came to Haggai the prophet, that he convey it to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak the high priest. The prophet informs them of the mistaken notion of the people that the time has not yet come to rebuild the Temple. On the contrary it is not right of them, according to God's word, to sit now in the comfort of their homes while the Temple lies ruined. He warns them to take the matter seriously, for their mishaps in their farming and earnings are due thereto. He urges them to go to the mountain to bring lumber and start building, and repeats that the failure of their enterprises is due thereto also, and still is their interest confined to their own homes. He warns them of a complete drought that will nullify all their toil in vineyard and field. The warning helped, for the people began to work on the Temple on the 24th day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius' reign.

HAGGAI II

Verses 1-5. Again on the 21st day of the 7th month came the word of God to Haggai, to convey it to Zerubbabel and Joshua and to the rest of the people. The prophet calls their attention to the fact that, to those who can still remember, the present Temple will not appear

as glorious as was the first, but nevertheless they must all exert their best efforts to complete it, and not fear (the difference) because God's Torah, which represents His covenant with them since the time of their going out of Egypt, and God's spirit reside among them.

Verses 6-9. The prophet now tells them that for a short while they will yet experience another (onslaught) after which the peoples will be taken by storm, to the end that they will bring their wealth into the Temple to fill it with glory, for after all the gold and the silver belong to God. Then shall its glory exceed that of the first Temple, and peace shall prevail in the place.

Verses 10-23. The prophet now proceeds to examine the priests in the laws that govern the contamination of holy foods in which matter they have failed. He therefore exhorts them to study up before the Temple is done. He wonders that their mishaps in field and vineyard have not yet touched their hearts to understand that only through the rebuilt Temple may they receive blessings.

On the 24th day of the (9th) month came the word of God to Haggai again. Zerubbabel is to be informed that the government (of Persia) will be overthrown and its strength annihilated, after which he will become the chosen insigne (as the leader of the people).

ZECHARIAH I

Verses 1-6. It was in the eighth month, in the second year of Darius' reign, that the word of God came to Zecharia, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet.

The prophet calls the attention of the people to the fact that the warnings of the earlier prophets to their

fathers, to the effect that retribution for their misdeeds would be exacted from them, had been realized. Though those perhaps are no more here along with their fathers, they know full well the comparative nature of these deaths—while the former died a natural death the latter departed violently. He therefore appeals to the people not to make the same mistake but that to get the proper response from God they return to Him henceforth.

Verses 7-17. This vision came to Zechariah on the 24th day of the 11th month, the month of Shebat.

One night the prophet saw a man riding a red horse, and he stopped among the myrtle trees at the bottom, and behind him were red horses, speckled and white. Upon the prophet's inquiry on the meaning of this the reply was that the riders of these horses had just come from an inspection tour around the earth and found everything quiet and at rest. The angel that forwarded this reply to the prophet regretted the fact that it was now seventy years that God's anger rested upon Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, and asked when would mercy come. God consoled the angel with pleasant words, which he forwarded to the prophet, that God would take great revenge for Zion. These nations will suffer God's wrath, because they have grossly exceeded His intentions of punishment. But in mercy will Jerusalem and the Temple be rebuilt with prosperity for export, and Zion will be consoled.

ZECHARIAH II

Verses 1-13. The prophet saw four horns, and upon inquiring from his companion angel as to their meaning, he was told that these were the horns which scattered

Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. Thereupon he saw four carpenters, and these he was told had come to smash the horns down. He then saw a man with a measuring line in his hand, and when he asked him where he was headed for, he told him he was going to measure the length and width of Jerusalem. But here the companion angel was instructed by another to inform the young prophet that this meant to indicate Jerusalem's outbreak from its confined walls, because of its multitudes of people and cattle. God would then constitute its fiery wall of honor around it. The people scattered in Assyria and Babylonia will escape back into Zion. The persecuting peoples will learn from this honor accorded Israel that by touching Israel they touched the apple of their eye, for they will now become Israel's spoil.

Verses 14-17. May the daughter of Zion sing and rejoice, for God dwells again among them. Many will then be the people that will declare themselves as joined unto God, but among you (Judah) shall He dwell, and you and Jerusalem shall become His inheritance in the Holy Land. Let all flesh be silent as God arises out of His holy dwelling place.

ZECHARIAH III

Verses 1-10. In a vision the prophet saw Joshua the high priest standing before the angel, with Satan on his right hand ready to indict him. The angel, however, called upon God to rebuke Satan, for Joshua was a brand plucked out of the fire. But Joshua wore filthy clothes, which the angel ordered those about him to remove, and put on fine ones instead, remarking thereby that thus have his sins been removed. And upon the request of the

prophet a mitre too was put on his head, all in the presence of the angel. Then the angel warned Joshua that he would be the supreme judge and master in the Temple even outranking the angels, if he walked in the ways of God and kept his charge. He also assured him, in the presence of his illustrious friends, that God's blossoming servant (Zerubbabel) would be elevated, that the rebuilding of the Temple, now being cleared of its obstructionists, would be speeded up sevenfold, thus wiping out the iniquity of the land in one day and introducing an era of pleasant neighborliness under the vine and fig tree.

ZECHARIAH IV

Verses 1-14. The prophet was awakened by his companion angel as if from sleep, to ask him what he now saw. What he saw was a golden candlestick with a bowl on top, with seven lamps to each of which ran seven pipes. On each side of the bowl was one olive tree. When the prophet confessed that he was at a loss as to the meaning of this, the angel told him that it spelled out God's message to Zerubbabel; Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. The great mountain before Zerubbabel will now be leveled down, so that the foundation stone shall emerge for which there shall be utterings of many thanks. Moreover, Zerubbabel laid the foundation of this House and he shall complete it—was God's word to the prophet, the truth of which the people will soon realize. Whoever despised the day of small beginnings shall now rejoice to see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, a sevenfold effort, proving that it was the eyes of God running through the whole earth. The prophet then inquired as to the meaning of the

two olive trees and the two olive branches, which through two golden pipes emptied the golden oil out of themselves. These, he was told, represented the two anointed ones (king and priest) that stand by the God of the whole earth.

ZECHARIAH V

Verses 1-11. Again the prophet saw a flying roll the length of which was twenty cubits and the width ten. This, the angel explained, contains the avowal that whoever has found excuses hitherto for his stealing and swearing, his house shall now be lodged with this vow, to destroy it with the timber and stones thereof.

The angel then pointed to another oncoming object which the prophet saw to be an ephah (measure) and this was the eyes in all the land, explained the angel. Also a talent of lead was rising while one woman was sitting in the ephah. This woman, came the explanation, represented wickedness, and as the angel flung her into the ephah he flung the weight of lead upon her mouth. Again he saw two women coming forth, in whose ostrich-like wings there was the wind, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. The prophet then asked whereto they were carrying it, and the angel replied—to build for it a house in the land of Shinar, where it might be well established (it being a land of deceitfulness).

ZECHARIAH VI

Verses 1-8. The prophet, upon lifting up his eyes,

saw four chariots coming out from between two mountains of brass, to the first of which were harnessed red horses, black horses to the second, white ones to the third, and to the fourth grizzled bay horses. Upon request of the prophet the angel explained that these chariots represented a movement to the four sides of the heaven by assent of the Master of the world. The chariot with the black horses was moving toward the north country (Persia; to reconquer the world from Babylonia); the one with the white horses was coming thereafter (Greece, to recapture the world from Persia); and the one with the grizzled horses was moving toward the south country (Turkey, then to establish its Empire). The bay horses came forth from Rome, and upon request received permission to go ever farther out into the world. (The interpretations are from the Mezudas). The prophet then heard a strong voice saying that it was the one moving out into the north country that quieted God's spirit (the welcome defeat of Babylonia).

Verses 9-15. Three men, named Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, came from the captivity (of Babylonia) to stay at the home of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; and they brought gold and silver along with them. The prophet was now directed by God to take the gold and silver and make the crowns, one of which he should put upon the head of Joshua the high priest. And he was to inform him thereby that he would in harmony share the glory with the man named Zemach (Zerubbabel), a descendent of royalty, who would build the Temple. Also in honor of the above mentioned men these crowns should remain in the Temple. But only in obedience to God's voice would the Temple be rebuilt by these immigrants, as they were bound to convince themselves of it.

ZECHARIAH VII

Verses 1-14. A committee headed by Bethel-sarezer and Regem-melech was sent from Babylonia to Beth-el (Judah) to inquire of the priests and prophets whether it was still necessary to fast and abstain on the 9th day of the fifth month as done heretofore. On the 24th day of Kislev, in the fourth year of Darius' reign, came God's answer to Zecharia, which was to be addressed to all the people and the priests, that their fasting on the fifth and seventh months for the past 70 years had been of no benefit to God, even as their eating and drinking were their own pleasure. What was important then while Jerusalem, the cities about her, the Negev, and the plain were still inhabited and in tranquility, was important now, namely, to practice true justice and to be kind and merciful to one another, not to oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, and the poor, and not to harbor grudges against one another. These precepts they absolutely refused to perform, and they were adamant against the Torah and all the inspired words of the former prophets. This brought down God's wrath upon them, with the result that they too were not heeded as they were scattered among unknown peoples, leaving their lovely land desolate with none to pass through it or return to it.

ZECHARIAH VIII

Verses 1-8. But the prophet declares that God has now become furiously jealous for Zion and would return to dwell there again so that Jerusalem would be called

the city of truth and God's mountain, the holy mountain. And in the streets of Jerusalem there will yet dwell old men and old women who because of age will need staffs for support. Also its streets will be filled with boys and girls playing. This phenomenon will be as marvelous to Me as to you. From east and west will I help My people come to live in Jerusalem so that they may become My people and I their God through their practice of truth and righteousness.

Verses 9-23. Now let your hands be strong, if you recall today the words which the former prophets spoke at the time the foundation of the Temple was first laid (two years before). Then there was no hire for men or beast, no peace from the enemy for anyone inside or outside the city, but bickering among one another. How different it is today when the people enjoy peace, producing seeds of the vine and the grain, and the heavens give their dew. From being a curse among the nations you have turned into a blessing, so be not afraid and let your hands be strong. I am now set to do you good even as I was determined then to harm you because your fathers had aroused my anger. Now these are the things for you to do: Speak the truth to one another, carry out sentences of truth and peace in your courts, do not scheme against one another, and love no false oath, for these are the things that God hates.

And as for the fast days that fall in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months, let them now become holy days of joy and happiness, only that you should love truth and peace.

The time is coming when cities and many nations will organize for the purpose of going to Jerusalem, there to pray to God, and a Jew will be their guide, to whom

they will profess that they do this because they have heard that God is with His people.

ZECHARIAH IX

Verses 1-8. The burden of God's word will extend to the land of Hadrach, and Damascus will become His abode before the eyes of all men. Especially the tribes of Israel will then turn to God. Hamath too shall be included within its (Palestine's) borders; also overly wise Tyre and Zidon. Though Tyre has built fortifications about herself and amassed immense quantities of silver and gold, still will God impoverish her by throwing her wealth into the sea and let herself be consumed by fire. Ashkelon and Gaza shall fear upon seeing this, as they are fated to lose king and people, and Ekron too, since her support (Tyre) has been shamed. Ashdod shall be designated as a place for the bastard, and the pride of the Philistines will be cut off. After its blood and abomination be removed, it will become a center of learning as is Judah and Ekron as is Jerusalem. My house I shall guard against any passing armies or any one oppressor, now that My eye is on it.

Verses 9-17. Zion and Jerusalem may now shout for joy, for their king is coming, just and ready to help, yet (humbly) riding upon an ass. Ephraim and Jerusalem shall do away with chariots, horses, and bows for war; instead they shall speak peace unto the nations and their influence shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. For the sake of your covenant by blood your prisoners (of the exile) are now freed and, as you clung to hope, you may now return to fortified strength, but there is yet another message for you.

The children of Zion will yet have to exercise a brave sword over the children of Greece. But under God's protection its lightning arrows will reach their mark. The people will then become intoxicated with God's salvation as if by wine. The (priestly) crown (probably referring to the Hasmoneans) will become the ensign of the land. How goodly and beautiful will be the well satisfied young men and jovial young women.

ZECHARIAH X

Verses 1-12. Only God can answer the plea for rain at any time, and yet have the people accepted the vain comfort of the false diviners and their lying dreams, and thus remain without leadership, just miserably journeying on like a flock without a shepherd. But while God's anger was upon the shepherds (leaders) and the he-goats (strong men), He remembered His flock, the house of Judah, and made them militant. It was from them that military prowess emerged to drive the oppressors out altogether. Like valiant men of war they shall tread the enemy to confound the riders on horses, because God is with them. The house of Judah will be inspired with strength to effect normal conditions, as if it had never been otherwise, because God's mercy is with them as He answers their call. Ephraim's might will become a source of joy for his children too, rejoicing in God. They shall be gathered to live unharassed and therefore increase normally. And though scattered among the nations they will remember God in all the distant places—which will become a life source to their children until they return. They shall return from Egypt and Assyria unto Gilead (Transjordan) and Lebanon (Palestine proper),

which will yet not prove enough place for them. And these nations shall be submerged in trouble as if by the waves of the sea, while Israel shall find strength and support in God.

(This prophecy is essentially a reference to the Maccabean struggle against the Greeks—Rashi.)

ZECHARIAH XI

Verses 1-6. The prophet speaks of a fire breaking out through the open doors of Lebanon and consuming the mighty trees, at which sight the weaker trees despair. Likewise is there a howling among the shepherds and the lions, since their prideful shelters are disrupted. The prophet is asked by God to relate what has happened to the shepherds that caused the death of the flock; they were killed or sold without mercy. This meant that God would no more pity the people, so that they would destroy one another or be destroyed by the king. As this would go on without being checked it would crush the land.

Verses 7-17. The poor flock He shepherded with two staves, one called Pleasant and one called Injurious. But mutual disgust caused Him to wipe the three shepherds out in one month. The flock was thus left to self-destruction. After that He cut asunder the staff called Pleasant as a sign that He had broken His covenant with the nations. Some of the faithful sheep knew that God had done this deliberately. A prize of 30 pieces of silver was then asked of them as a voluntary contribution, which God asked the prophet to put into the presumably secure treasure place; and this he did. After that the second staff called Injurious He cut asunder, as a sign that

He had broken the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. Then God told the prophet again to take unto himself the instruments of a foolish shepherd. This meant the disruption of any control over the flock, which caused them to dwindle away. The foolish shepherd is cursed for forsaking the flock.

(This seems to be a picture of the events that would lead up to destruction of the Second Temple. The Pleasant staff refers to the three pious Hasmonean brothers, Judah, Jonathan, and Simeon: the Injurious staff, to the impious rulers of that house, who ruled thereafter. The 30 pieces of silver, representing the upright people, could not halt the decay and decline of the land, which eventually led to the burning of the Temple (alluded to as Lebanon) and the loss of independence.

(Essentially this is the interpretation of the Mezudas.)

ZECHARIAH XII

Verses 1-14. This prophecy concerns Israel. It is from God Who established the heavens, laid the foundations of the earth, and formed the spirit in man.

The siege against Judah and Jerusalem will constitute a cup of poison for the nations round about. Jerusalem will be the burdensome stone that will cut in pieces and do away with the peoples. Their horses will be smitten with madness and blindness while I guard over Judah. The officers of Judah will think that the prayers of the people of Jerusalem helped to imbue them with strength. But actually the victory of Judah will be brought about without the physical help of the people of Jerusalem, so as not to inflate the latter with

excessive pride. Jerusalem however will vigorously defend itself with God's help, for it will be God's desire to destroy the peoples that come against Jerusalem. A spirit of grace and supplication will come upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem while they bitterly eulogize those who were killed. The principal families of the House of David will be separately eulogized, as well as the other families, and separate tribute will be paid their women.

ZECHARIAH XIII

Verses 1-6. In that day a fountain will be opened wherewith the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem may perform their ritual cleansings. And too the names of the idols, the false prophets, and the unclean spirit will be entirely obliterated from the land. Parents will destroy their own son if he dares prophesy falsely. In fact, the false prophets will be ashamed of their visions, and in order to deny any suspicion they will remove their (special) fur coats and will claim to be farmers since their youth. And as to their wounds (which false prophets usually inflicted upon themselves) these they will claim to have incurred at their loved occupation.

Verses 7-9. The self-styled leaders and their aides will go by the sword and the people freed. And while two-thirds of the people will be cut down, the remaining third will be so chastened as to fit the name, My people, since it will be in God's name that they will call—and accordingly will receive His response.

ZECHARIAH XIV

Verses 1-9. The day is coming when your robbed wealth will be redistributed among you. And while the nations that war upon Jerusalem will have conquered the city, with the houses destroyed, the women ravished, and half its people leaving for exile, God will at this juncture proceed to fight them pointblank. Then will the Mount of Olives split in half, leaving a great valley between through which the people will run in excitement as they ran during the earthquake in the time of Uzziah, King of Judah. But God and His angels will come on that dim day, which will break into light even as evening approaches. In that day a buoyant stream shall go out from Jerusalem, flowing summer and winter on either side toward the seas. Then shall God be the King over the whole earth and He shall be One and His name One.

Verses 10-21. The land south of Jerusalem will become level from Geba unto Rimmon, and the original city will assume greater prominence, extended from Benjamin's gate and up to the place of the first gate, to the corner gate and the tower of Hanenel, unto the vinepresses of the king. It will now be safe, never to be ruined again.

As to the nations who fought against Jerusalem they will be stricken with a consuming disease and will disappear amidst great confusion. Likewise will be the fate of their beasts of burden. However, the great quantities of gold, silver, and apparel will be gathered up also by Judah, who participated in the fighting in Jerusalem.

Those of the nations who are left will come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Should they

fail to do so they will be punished by lack of rain, or as in the case of Egypt by the failure of the water (of the Nile) to rise. There will then be an abundance of sacrificial offerings, and not for the purpose of making a profit.

MALACHI I

Verses 1-5. The prophetic word of God to Israel that came through Malachi. The prophet declares that God loves Jacob and hates Esau, although they are brothers, and Esau's destructive cities bear witness to this as does God's determination that they never be rebuilt again, but that they be called the border of wickedness and the people with whom God is indignant, while Israel's renown goes seemingly beyond its border.

Verses 6-14. But God has not been respected either as a son respects a father or feared as a servant would fear his master, for the priests display great disrespect toward the service at the altar by sacrificing any animal regardless of it being blind, lame or sick, and claiming that it matters not, although one would not dare to present such an animal to a governor, whether for the sake of getting a favor or obtaining forgiveness. Verily can their prayers effect the grace from God or be at all acceptable? Would that the doors be closed so that the altar may not burn in vain, since God does not desire you or your offerings. God's name is great among all the peoples throughout the world and wherever a clean offering is brought it is meant for His name. But you have profaned God's name by pronouncing His table as polluted, and by your expression that His food is contemptible. And you have pronounced the whole thing as a burden and sniffed at it, so you might bring any torn,

lame, or sick animal as an offering; would God accept it? The prophet curses the deceiver who has a (fine) male animal in his herd and yet vows to give a maimed one instead, not realizing that God is a great King and His name is dreadful even among the nations.

MALACHI II

Verses 1-9. The prophet warns the priests that if this precept is not properly fulfilled or if they be indifferent towards God's honor then shall a curse disrupt their blessings, even as the curse is already on because of their indifference. Your seed is failing and your faces are becoming as soiled as is the dung of your feast offerings. This will make you realize that this precept was sent you to serve as a covenant between the Levite and God. The covenant assured him life and peace in recompense for his fearing My name. The Torah of truth was in his mouth and no wrong was in his lips; in peace and in equity did he walk with God, and many did he turn away from iniquity, for the lips of the priest should keep knowledge and the Torah should be sought from his mouth, as he is the messenger of the God of hosts. But you have departed from the road and many have you wrongly instructed in the Torah; in a word you have corrupted God's covenant with the Levite. Accordingly have you become contemptible and base before the people, because you were partial in the law.

Verses 10-17. The Israelites married non-Jewish women while they retained their Jewish wives. The prophet condemns this as being treacherous to their Jewish wives. He appeals to them in the name of our common father (Abraham) that they should not profane the cove-

nant of our fathers, and in the name of the one God that created us all, cease this treachery. He also curses them because they are depleting the strength of the race as such a union will not produce teachers and scholars in the tabernacles of Jacob. Another thing: this treacherous act against the Jewish wife of one's youth saddens her heart; and as she covers the altar with her tears God cannot and will not respond to their services. Besides, man has been singled out to be of distinguished spirit, and this spirit must be guarded so that it may be transferred to the offspring which cannot be done under such conditions. It is no less treacherous and a distortion of the spirit if you should cover it by divorcing your wife. Do not say that God approves or is indifferent to the one who does evil or he would act accordingly.

MALACHI III

Verses 1-12. As to the inquiry on part of the people (see preceding chapter) whether God is indifferent, let it be known that God is ready to send His messenger to pave the way for the impossible and staggering day when the sons of Levi will be thoroughly purged, so that those who remain will tend to the offerings with legal precision. The ancient pleasantness to God of the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will thus be reasserted. God as His own swift witness will also pass sentence upon the sorcerers, adulterers, false swearers, oppressors of the hireling in his wages, the widow, the fatherless, and those that turn away the alien from his right, and fear not God. Truly God has not changed, and you sons of Jacob are not through. You have refused to obey the laws, despite warnings from time immemorial, as in your present robbing

of God by not giving the tithes and the offerings (terumah). This brings down the curse upon the whole nation. On the other hand, the giving of it would shower upon you endless blessings and God would prefer that you test Him therewith. Your crops and your vines would then never go to waste. You would call out the praise of all the nations as yours being a delightsome land.

Versese 13-21. You have pressed against God with the argument that there is no profit in keeping the ordinances and being humble since the wicked and the presumptuous get away with it. But God shall listen and write down the conversation about this by those who fear him. And when the day arrives that mercy will be needed you shall then see wherein lies the difference between the righteous and the wicked and between those who serve and those who do not. In that day will the proud and those that do wickedly be completely burned, while the sun of righteousness shall prove to be a healing to those who fear God's name.

Verses 22-24. The prophet appeals to them to remember the Torah which Moses gave, with its statutes and laws, as a shield against the great and dreadful day when Elijah the prophet shall come to reconcile fathers and children (to establish peace in the world).

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